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Persuasion means trying to influence someone's actions, thinking, or decision making (Figure 4.1). In the workplace, we rely on persuasion daily: to win coworker support, to attract clients and customers, to request funding. But changing someone's mind is never easy, and sometimes impossible. Your success will depend on who you are trying to persuade, what you are requesting, and how entrenched they are in their own views.

Persuasion is required whenever you tackle an issue about which people disagree. Assume, for example, that you are Manager of Employee Relations at Softbyte, a software developer whose recent sales have plunged. To avoid layoffs, the company is trying to persuade employees to accept a temporary cut in salary. As you plan your various memos and presentations on this volatile issue, you identify your major *claims*. (A claim is a statement of the point you are trying to prove.) For instance, you might want employees to recognize facts they've chosen to ignore:

> Because of the global recession, our software sales in two recent quarters have fallen nearly 30 percent, and earnings should remain flat all year.

Even when a fact is obvious, people often disagree about what it means or what action it indicates. And so you might want to influence their interpretation of the facts:

> Reduced earnings mean temporary layoffs for roughly 25 percent of our staff. But we could avoid layoffs entirely if each of us at Softbyte would accept a 10-percent salary cut until the market improves.

And eventually you might want to ask for direct action:

> Our labor contract stipulates that such an across-the-board salary cut would require a two-thirds majority vote. Once you've had time to examine the facts, we hope you'll vote "yes" on next Tuesday's secret ballot.

Whenever people disagree about what the facts are or what the facts mean or what should be done, you need to make the best case for your own view.

On the job, your memos, letters, reports, and proposals advance claims like these (Gilsdorf, "Executives' and Academics' Perception" 59–62):

- We can't possibly meet this production deadline without sacrificing quality.
- We're doing all we can to correct your software problem.
- This hiring policy is discriminatory.
- Our software is exactly what you need.

- I deserve a raise.

Such claims, of course, are likely to be rejected—unless they are backed up by a convincing argument.

NOTE *"Argument," in this context, means "a process of careful reasoning in support of a claim"—and not "a quarrel or dispute." People who "argue skillfully" connect with others in a rational, sensible way, without animosity. But people who are merely "argumentative," on the other hand, simply make others defensive.*

IDENTIFY YOUR SPECIFIC GOAL

Arguments differ in how much they ask from people. Is your goal to (a) influence people's opinions, (b) seek their support, (c) induce direct action, or (d) alter people's behavior?

Arguing to Influence People's Opinions

Some arguments ask for minimal audience involvement. Maybe you want people to agree that the benefits of bioengineered foods outweigh the risks, or that your company's monitoring of employee emails is hurting morale. The goal here is merely to move readers to change their thinking, to say "I agree."

Arguing to Enlist People's Support

Some arguments ask people to take a definite stand. Maybe you want readers to support a referendum to restrict cloning experiments, or to lobby for a daycare center where you work. The goal is to get people actively involved, to get them to ask "How can I help?"

Presenting a Proposal

Proposals offer specific plans for solving technical problems. The proposals we examine in Chapter 23 typically ask audiences to take—or to approve—some form of direct action (say, a plan for improving your firm's computer security or a Web-based orientation program for new employees). But before you can get people to act, you must complete these preliminary persuasive tasks:

1. Spell out the problem (and its causes) in enough detail to convince readers of its importance.
2. Point out the benefits of solving the problem.
3. Offer a realistic, cost-effective solution.

4. Address anticipated objections to your plan.

5. Give reasons why your readers should be the ones to act.

Your proposal goal is achieved when people say “Okay, let’s do this project.”

Arguing to Change People’s Behavior

Getting people to change their behavior is a huge challenge. Maybe you want a coworker to stop dominating your staff meetings, or to be more open about sharing information that you need to do your job. People take such arguments very personally. And the more personal the issue, the greater their resistance. After all, you’re trying to get them to admit, “I was wrong. From now on, I’ll do it differently.”

The above categories can overlap, depending on your exact situation. But never launch an argument without a clear view of exactly *what* you want to see happen.

TRY TO PREDICT AUDIENCE REACTION

Any document can evoke different reactions depending on a user’s temperament, interests, fears, biases, ambitions, or assumptions. Whenever peoples’ views are challenged, they react with questions like these:
People read between the lines. Some might be impressed and pleased by your suggestions for increasing productivity or cutting expenses; some might feel offended or threatened. Some might suspect you of trying to undermine your boss. Furthermore, no one wants bad news; some people prefer to ignore it. Such are the “political realities” in any organization (Hays 19).

EXPECT AUDIENCE RESISTANCE

People who haven’t made up their minds are more receptive to persuasion than those who have:

> We need others’ arguments and evidence. We’re busy. We can’t and don’t want to discover and reason out everything for ourselves. We look for help, for short cuts, in making up our minds. (Gilsdorf, “Write Me” 12)

People who *have* decided what to think, however, naturally assume they’re right, and they often refuse to budge. Whenever you question people’s stance on an issue or try to change their behavior, expect resistance:

> By its nature, informing "works" more often than persuading does. While most people do not mind taking in some new facts, many people do resist efforts to change their opinions, attitudes, or behaviors. (Gilsdorf, "Executives' and Academics' Perception" 61)

For people to admit you might be right they must often admit they might be wrong, and the more strongly they identify with their position, the more resistance you can expect.

When people do yield to persuasion, they may respond grudgingly, willingly, or enthusiastically (Figure 4.2). Researchers categorize these responses as compliance, identification, or internalization (Kelman 51–60):

- *Compliance:* "I'm giving in to your demand in order to be rewarded or to avoid punishment. I really disagree, but I feel pressured, and so I'll go along to get along."
- *Identification:* "I'm going along with your appeal because I like and believe you, I want you to like me, and I believe we have something in common."
- *Internalization:* "I'm going along because what you're saying makes good sense and it fits my goals and values."

Although mere compliance is sometimes necessary (as in military orders or workplace safety regulations), nobody likes to be coerced. If people comply only because they feel intimidated and have no choice, you can expect to lose their loyalty and goodwill—and as soon as the threat or reward disappears, so will their compliance. Persuasion relies on identification and, especially, internalization.

KNOW HOW TO CONNECT WITH THE AUDIENCE

Persuasive people know when to simply declare what they want, when to reach out and create a relationship, or when to appeal to reason (Kipnis and Schmidt 40–46). These strategies can be labeled the *power connection*, the *relationship connection*, and the *rational connection*, respectively (Figure 4.3).

For illustration of these different connections, picture this situation: Your Company, XYZ Engineering, has just developed a fitness program, based on findings that healthy employees work better, take fewer sick days, and cost less to

insure. This program offers clinics for smoking, stress reduction, and weight loss, along with group exercise. In your second month on the job you read this notice in your email:

POWER CONNECTION

MEMORANDUM
To: Employees at XYZ.com
FROM: GMaximus@XYZ.com
DATE: June 6, 20xx
SUBJECT: Physical Fitness

On Monday, June 10, all employees will report to the company gymnasium at 8:00 a.m. for the purpose of choosing a walking or jogging group. Each group will meet for 30 minutes three times weekly during lunch time.

How would you react? Despite the reference to "choosing," people are given no real choice but simply ordered to show up. Typically used by bosses and other authority figures, the power connection does get people to comply but it almost always alienates them as well!

Suppose, instead, that you receive this next version of the memo. How would you react now?

RELATIONSHIP CONNECTION

MEMORANDUM
TO: Employees at XYZ.com
FROM: GMaximus@XYZ.com
DATE: June 6, 20xx

SUBJECT: An Invitation to Physical Fitness

I realize most of you spend lunch hour playing cards, reading, or just enjoying a bit of well-earned relaxation in the middle of a hectic day. But I'd like to invite you to join our lunchtime walking/jogging club.

We're starting this club in hopes that it will be a great way for us all to feel better. Why not give it a try?

This second version conveys the sense that "we're all in this together." Instead of being commanded, readers are invited—offered a real choice.

How the audience perceives the writer is often more important than the writer's argument itself. People are more open to someone they like and trust. The relationship connection is especially vital in cross-cultural communication—as long as it is not too "chummy" and informal (see pages 59–61).

NOTE *Of course, you would be unethical in appealing to—or faking—the relationship merely to hide the fact that you have*

no evidence to support your claim (R. Ross 28). People need to find the claim believable ("Exercise will help me feel better") and relevant ("I, personally, need this kind of exercise").

Here is a third version of the memo. As you read, think about the ways it makes a persuasive case.

RATIONAL CONNECTION

MEMORANDUM
TO: Employees at XYZ.com
FROM: GMaximus@XYZ.com
DATE: June 6, 20xx
SUBJECT: Invitation to Join One of Our Jogging or Walking Groups

I want to share a recent study from the *New England Journal of Medicine*, which reports that adults who walk two miles a day could increase their life expectancy by three years.

Other research shows that 30 minutes of moderate aerobic exercise, at least three times weekly, has a significant and long-term effect in reducing stress, lowering blood pressure, and improving job performance.

As a first step in our exercise program, XYZ Engineering is offering a variety of daily jogging groups: The One-Milers, Three-Milers, and Five-Milers. All groups will meet at designated times on our brand new, quarter-mile, rubberized clay track.

For beginners or skeptics, we're offering daily two-mile walking groups. For the truly resistant, we offer the option of a Monday–Wednesday–Friday two-mile walk.

Coffee and lunch breaks can be rearranged to accommodate whichever group you select.

Why not take advantage of our hot new track? As small incentives, XYZ will reimburse anyone who signs up as much as $100 for running or walking shoes, and will even throw in an extra fifteen minutes for lunch breaks. And with a consistent turnout of 90 percent or better, our company insurer may be able to eliminate everyone's $200 yearly deductible in medical costs.

This version conveys respect for the reader's intelligence *and* for the relationship. With any reasonable audience, the rational connection stands the best chance of succeeding.

NOTE *Keep in mind that no cookbook formula exists, and in many situations, even the best persuasive attempts may be rejected.*

ALLOW FOR GIVE-AND-TAKE

Reasonable people expect a balanced argument, with both sides of the issue considered evenly and fairly. Persuasion requires flexibility on your part. Instead of merely pushing your own case forward, consider other viewpoints. In advocating your position, for example, you need to (Senge 8):

- explain the reasoning and evidence behind it
- invite people to find weak spots in your case, and to improve on it
- invite people to challenge your ideas (say, with alternative reasoning or data)

When others offer an opposing view, you need to:

- try to see things their way, instead of insisting on your way
- rephrase an opposing position in your own words, to be sure you understand it accurately
- try reaching agreement on what to do next, to resolve any insurmountable differences
- explore possible compromises others might accept

Perhaps some XYZ employees, for example, have better ideas for making the exercise program work for everyone.

ASK FOR A SPECIFIC RESPONSE

Unless you are giving an order, diplomacy is essential. But don’t be afraid to ask for what you want:

> The moment of decision is made easier for people when we show them what the desired action is, rather than leaving it up to them....No one likes to make decisions: there is always a risk involved. But if the writer asks for the action, and makes it look easy and urgent, the decision itself looks less risky. (Cross 3)

Tell people exactly what you want them to do or think.

NOTE *Keep in mind that overly direct communication can offend audiences from other cultures. Don’t mistake bluntness for clarity.*

Never Ask for Too Much

People never accept anything they consider unreasonable. And the definition of “reasonable” depends on the individual. Employees at XYZ, for example, differ as to which

walking/jogging option they might accept. To the runner writing the memo, a daily five-mile jog might seem perfectly reasonable, but to most people this would seem outrageous. XYZ's program, therefore, must offer something most people (except, say, couch potatoes and those in poor health) accept as reasonable.

Any request that exceeds its audience's "latitude of acceptance" (Sherif 39–59) is doomed. To get a clear sense of exactly how much is *achievable* in the given situation, ask around beforehand and feel out the people involved.

RECOGNIZE ALL COMMUNICATION CONSTRAINTS

Constraints are limits or restrictions imposed by the situation—who can say what to whom, and so on.

- What can I say around here, to whom, and how?
- Should I say it in person, by phone, in print, online?
- Could I be creating any ethical or legal problems?
- Is this the best time to say it?
- What's my relationship with the audience?
- Who are the personalities involved?
- Is there any peer pressure to overcome?
- How big an issue is this?

Organizational Constraints

Organizations announce their own official constraints: deadlines; budgets; guidelines for organizing, formatting, and distributing documents; and so on. But communicators also face *unofficial* constraints:

> Most organizations have clear rules for interpreting and acting on statements made by colleagues. Even if the rules are unstated, we know who can initiate interaction, who can be approached, who can propose a delay, what topics can or cannot be discussed, who can interrupt or be interrupted, who can order or be ordered, who can terminate interaction, and how long interaction should last. (Littlejohn and Jabusch 143)

The exact rules vary among organizations, and most are unspoken, but anyone who breaks those rules (say, by going over a supervisor's head with a complaint or suggestion) invites disaster.

Airing even a legitimate gripe in the wrong way through the wrong medium to the wrong person can be fatal to your work relationships. The following email, for instance, is likely

to be interpreted by the executive officer as petty and whining behavior, and by the maintenance director as a public attack.

> MEMORANDUM
> To: CEO@XYZ.com
> CC: MaintenanceDirector@XYZ.com
> FROM: Middle Manager@XYZ.com
> DATE: May 13, 20xx
> RE: Trash Problem
>
> Please ask the Maintenance Director to get his people to do their job for a change. I realize we're all understaffed, but I've gotten dozens of complaints this week about the filthy restrooms and overflowing wastebaskets in my department. If he wants us to empty our own wastebaskets, why doesn't he
> let us know?

Instead, why not address the message directly to the key person—or better yet, phone the person?

> MEMORANDUM
> To: MaintenanceDirector@XYZ.com
> FROM: MiddleManager@XYZ.com
> DATE: May 13, 20xx
> RE: Staffing Shortage
>
> I wonder if we could meet to exchange some ideas about how our departments might be able to support one another during these staffing shortages.

Can you identify the unspoken rules in companies where you have worked? What happens when such rules are ignored?

Legal Constraints

What you are allowed to say may be limited by contract or by laws that govern confidentiality or customers' rights or product liability:

- In a collection letter for nonpayment, you can threaten to take legal action, but you cannot threaten to publicize the refusal to pay, nor can you pretend to be an attorney (Varner and Varner 31–40).
- If someone requests information on your employee, you can "respond only to specific requests that have been approved by the employee. Further, your comments should relate only to job performance which is documented" (Harcourt 64).
- If you write sales literature or manuals, you and your company can be sued over faulty information that causes injury or damage.

Whenever you prepare a document, be aware of possible legal problems. For instance, suppose an employee of XYZ Engineering (page 49) drops dead during the new exercise program you've marketed so persuasively. Could you and your company be liable? Should you require physical exams and stress tests (at company expense) for participants? When in doubt, always consult an attorney.

Ethical Constraints

Ethical constraints are defined not by law, but by honesty and fair play. For example, it may be perfectly legal to promote a new pesticide by emphasizing its effectiveness, while downplaying its carcinogenic effects; whether such action is ethical, however, is another issue. To earn people's trust, you will find that "saying the right thing" involves more than legal considerations. (See Chapter 5 for more on ethics.)

NOTE *Persuasive skills carry tremendous potential for abuse. "Presenting your best case" does not mean deceiving others—even if the dishonest answer is the one people want to hear.*

Time Constraints

Persuasion is often a matter of good timing. Should you wait for an opening, release the message immediately, or what? Let's assume that you're trying to "bring out the vote" among members of your professional society on some hotly debated issue, say, whether to refuse to work on any project related to biological warfare. You might prefer to wait until you have all the information you need or until you've analyzed the situation and planned a strategy. But if you delay, rumors or paranoia could cause people to harden their positions—and their resistance.

Social and Psychological Constraints

Too often, the human side of communication leads to misunderstanding, due to constraints like these:

- *Relationship with the audience:* Is your reader a superior, a subordinate, a peer? (Try not to dictate to subordinates or shield superiors from bad news.) How well do you know each other? Can you joke around or should you be serious? Do you get along or have a history of conflict or mistrust? What you say and how you say it—and how it is interpreted—will be influenced by the relationship.
- *Audience's personality:* Willingness to be persuaded depends largely on personality (Stonecipher 188-89).

Does this person tend to be more open- or closed-minded, more skeptical or trusting, more bold or cautious, more of a conformist or a rugged individual? The less persuadable your audience, the harder you must work. For a totally resistant audience, you may want to back off—or give up altogether.

- *Audience's sense of identity and affiliation as a group:* Does the group have a strong identity (union members, conservationists, engineers)? Will group loyalty or pressure prevent certain appeals from working? Address the group's collective concerns.
- *Perceived size and urgency of the issue:* Does the audience see this as a cause for fear or for hope? Is trouble looming or has a great opportunity emerged? Has the issue been understated or overstated? Big problems often cause people to exaggerate their fears, loyalties, and resistance to change—or to seek quick solutions. Assess the problem realistically. Don't downplay a serious problem, but don't cause panic, either.

SUPPORT YOUR CLAIMS

The persuasive argument is the one that makes the best case—in the audience's view:

> When we seek a project extension, argue for a raise, interview for a job...we are involved in acts that require good reasons. Good reasons allow our audience and ourselves to find a shared basis for cooperating....[Y]ou can use marvelous language, tell great stories, provide exciting metaphors, speak in enthralling tones, and even use your reputation to advantage, but what it comes down to is that you must speak to your audience with reasons they understand. (Hauser 71)

Imagine the following situation: As documentation manager for Bemis Software, a rapidly growing company, you supervise preparation and production of all user manuals. The present system for producing manuals is inefficient because three different departments are involved in (1) assembling the material, (2) word processing and designing, and (3) publishing the manuals. Much time and energy are wasted as a manual goes back and forth among software specialists, communication specialists, and the art and printing department. After studying the problem and calling in a consultant, you decide that greater efficiency would result if desktop publishing software were installed in all computer terminals. Everyone involved could then contribute during all

three phases. To sell this plan to bosses and coworkers you need reasons based on *evidence* and *appeals to everyone's needs and values* (Rottenberg 104–06).

Offer Convincing Evidence

Evidence (factual support from an outside source) is a powerful persuader—as long as it meets an audience's standards. A discerning audience evaluates evidence using these criteria (Perloff 157–58):

- *The evidence has quality.* People expect evidence that is strong, specific, new, different, and verifiable (provable).
- *The sources are credible.* People want to know where the evidence comes from, how it was collected, and who collected it.
- *The evidence is considered reasonable.* The evidence falls within the audience's "latitude of acceptance" (discussed on page 51–52).

Common types of evidence include factual statements, statistics, examples, and expert testimony.

FACTUAL STATEMENTS. A *fact* is something that can be demonstrated by observation, experience, research, or measurement-—and that your audience is willing to recognize.

> Most of our competitors already have desktop publishing networks in place.

Be selective. Decide which facts best support your case.

STATISTICS. Numbers can be highly convincing. Many readers focus on the ''bottom line'': costs, savings, losses, profits.

> After a cost/benefit analysis, our accounting office estimates that an integrated desktop publishing network will save Bemis 30 percent in production costs and 25 percent in production time—savings that will enable the system to pay for itself within one year.

But numbers can mislead. Your statistics must be accurate, trustworthy, and easy to understand and verify (see pages 181–87). Always cite your source.

EXAMPLES. Examples help people visualize and remember the point. For example, the best way to explain what you mean by

''inefficiency'' in your company is to show ''inefficiency'' occurring:

> The figure illustrates the inefficiency of Bemis's present system for producing manuals:

> A manual typically goes back and forth through this cycle three or four times, wasting time and effort in all three departments.

Always explain how the example fits the point it is designed to illustrate.

EXPERT TESTIMONY. Expert opinion-—if it is unbiased and if people recognize the expert -—lends authority and credibility to any claim.

Ron Catabia, nationally recognized networking consultant, has studied our needs and strongly recommends we move ahead with the integrated network.

See page 125 for the limits of expert testimony.

NOTE *Finding evidence to support a claim often requires that we go beyond our own experience by doing some type of research. (See Part II.)*

Evidence alone may not be enough to change a person's mind. At Bemis, for example, the bottom line might be very persuasive for company executives but managers and employees will be asking: Does this threaten my authority? Will I have to work harder? Will I fall behind? Is my job in danger? This group expects some benefit beyond company profit.

Appeal to Common Goals and Values

Identify at least one goal you and your audience have in common: "What do we all want most?"

Everyone at Bemis, for example, presumably wants job security and some control over their career. A persuasive recommendation will therefore take these goals into account:

> I'd like to show how desktop publishing skills, instead of threatening anyone's job, would only increase career mobility for all of us.

People's goals are shaped by their values (qualities they believe in, ideals they stand for): friendship, loyalty, honesty, equality, fairness, and so on (Rokeach 57–58).

At Bemis, you might appeal to the commitment to quality and achievement shared by the company and individual employees:

> None of us needs reminding of the fierce competition in the software industry. The improved collaboration among networking departments will result in better manuals, keeping us on the front line of quality and achievement.

Give people reasons that have real meaning for *them* personally. For example, in a recent study of teenage attitudes about the hazards of smoking, respondents listed these reasons for not smoking: bad breath, difficulty concentrating, loss of friends, and trouble with adults. No respondents listed dying of cancer—presumably because this reason carries little meaning for young people personally (Baumann et al. 510–30).

NOTE *We are often tempted to emphasize anything that advances our case and to ignore anything that impedes it. But any message that prevents readers from making their best decision is unethical.*

CONSIDER THE CULTURAL CONTEXT

Roughly 60 percent of business ventures between the United States and other countries fail (Isaacs 43) often because of obstacles posed by cultural differences. Depending on social customs and values, people from different cultures react differently to persuasive appeals[1]:

- Some cultures hesitate to debate, criticize, or express disagreement. They prefer indirect, roundabout ways of approaching an issue—viewing it from all angles before declaring a position.
- Some cultures observe special formalities in communicating (say, expressions of concern for a person's family).
- Many cultures consider the source of a message as important as its content. Establishing trust and building a relationship are essential before doing business.
- Some cultures trust oral more than written communication.
- Cultures respond differently to different emotional pressures, such as feeling obliged to return favors or following the lead of their peers. (See Consider This, page 56.)

- Cultures differ in their attitudes toward big business, technology, competition, or women in the workplace. They might value delayed gratification more than immediate reward, stability more than progress, time more than profit, politeness more than candor, age more than youth.

One especially volatile cause of clashes among different cultures is related to *face saving:* "the act of preserving one's prestige or outward dignity" (Victor 159– 61). People lose face in situations like these:

- *When they are offended or embarrassed by blatant criticism:* A U.S. businessperson in China decides to "tell it like it is," and proceeds to criticize the Tiananmen Square massacre and China's illegal contributions to American political parties (Stepanek 4).
- *When their customs are ignored:* An American female arrives to negotiate with older, Japanese males; Silicon Valley businesspeople show up in T-shirts and baseball caps to meet with hosts wearing suits.
- *When their values are trivialized:* An American in Paris greets his French host as "Pierre," slaps him on the back, and jokes that the "rich French food" on the Concorde flight had him "throwing up all the way over" (Isaacs 43).

Anytime someone feels insulted, meaningful interaction is over.

Show respect for a country's cultural heritage by learning all you can about its history, landmarks, famous people, and especially its customs and values (Isaacs 43). The following questions can get you started.

NOTE *Violating a person's cultural frame of reference is offensive, but so is reducing individual complexity to a laundry list of cultural stereotypes. Any generalization about any group presents a limited picture and in no way accurately characterizes any or all members of the group.*

SHAPE YOUR ARGUMENT

Readers need to follow your reasoning; they expect to see how, exactly, you support your claim. The model in Figure 4.4 lays out a standard shape that can be adapted for most arguments. Select the elements appropriate to your situation and order them in a sequence that reveals a clear line of thought.

NOTE *People rarely change their minds quickly or without good reason. A truly resistant*

audience will dismiss even the best arguments and may end up feeling threatened and resentful. Even with a receptive audience, attempts at persuasion can fail. Often, the best you can do is avoid disaster and give people the chance to appreciate the merits of the case.

Figure 4.5 shows a letter from a company that distributes systems for generating electrical power from recycled steam (cogeneration). President Tom Ewing persuasively answers a potential customer's question: "Why should I invest in the system you are proposing for my plant?" As you read, notice how the evidence and appeals support the opening claim. Notice also the focus on reasons important to the reader.

Figure 4.6 shows the audience and use profile for the writing situation in
Figure 4.5.

NOTE *Trying to change someone's opinion can be hard—but can also make a huge difference. For example, consider this study by the Rand Institute: Health insurers and HMOs often refuse to pay for costly medical treatment or additional services. Among patients who are denied benefits, only 3 or 4 per thousand ever make an appeal to the company, yet 42 percent of such appeals are successful (Fischman 50).*

EXERCISES

1. You work for a technical marketing firm proud of its reputation for honesty and fair dealing. A handbook being prepared for new personnel includes a section titled "How to Avoid Abusing Your Persuasive Skills." All employees have been asked to contribute to this section by preparing a written response to the following:

   Share a personal experience in which you or a friend were the victim of persuasive abuse in a business transaction. In a one- or two-page memo, describe the situation and explain exactly how the intimidation, manipulation, or deception occurred.

   Write the memo and be prepared to discuss it in class.
2. Recall an experience in which you accepted or rejected a persuasive appeal that involved some major decision in your life (selecting a college, buying your first car, supporting a political or environmental cause, joining the military, or the like). After reviewing pages 55–56, identify the major influences that caused you to say "yes" or "no." Be prepared to discuss your experience and its persuasion dynamics with the class.
3. Find an example of an effective persuasive letter. In a memo to your instructor, explain why and how the message succeeds. Base your evaluation on the persuasion guidelines, pages 66–68. Attach a copy of the letter to your evaluation memo. Be prepared to discuss your evaluation in class.

   Now, evaluate an ineffective document, explaining how and why it fails.
4. Think about some change you would like to see on your campus or at work. Perhaps you would like to promote something new, such as a campus-wide policy on plagiarism, changes in course offerings or requirements, more access to computers, a policy on sexist language, or a daycare center. Or perhaps you would like to improve something, such as the grading system, campus lighting, the system for student

evaluation of teachers, or the promotion system at work. Or perhaps you would like to stop something from happening, such as noise in the library or sexual harassment at work.

Decide whom you want to persuade and write a memo to that audience. Anticipate carefully your audience's implied questions, such as:

- Do we really have a problem or need?
- If so, should we care enough about it to do anything?
- Can the problem be solved?
- What are some possible solutions?
- What benefits can we anticipate? What liabilities?

Can you think of additional audience questions? Do an audience and use analysis based on the profile sheet, page 68.

Don't think of this memo as the final word but as a consciousness-raising introduction that gets the reader to acknowledge that the issue deserves attention. At this early stage, highly specific recommendations would be premature and inappropriate.

5. Challenge an attitude or viewpoint that is widely held by your audience. Maybe you want to persuade your classmates that the time required to earn a bachelor's degree should be extended to five years or that grade inflation is watering down your school's reputation. Maybe you want to claim that the campus police should (or should not) wear guns. Or maybe you want to ask students to support a 10 percent tuition increase in order to make more computers and software available.

   Do an audience and use analysis based on the profile sheet, page 68. Write specific answers to the following questions:

   - What are the political realities?
   - What kind of resistance could you anticipate?
   - How would you connect with readers?
   - What about their latitude of acceptance?
   - Any other constraints?
   - What reasons could you offer to support your claim?

   In a memo to your instructor, submit your plan for presenting your case. Be prepared to discuss your plan in class.

6. Assess the political climate of an organization where you have worked—as an employee, a volunteer, an intern, a member of the military, or a member of a campus group (say, the school newspaper or the student senate). Analyze the decision-making culture of that organization:

   - Who are the key decision makers? How are decisions made?
   - How are policies primarily communicated (via power connection, relationship connection, rational connection)?
   - How much resistance occurs? How much give-and-take occurs?
   - What major constraints govern communication?
   - How would these considerations affect the way you would construct a persuasive case on an issue of importance to this organization?
   - How could the organizational structure be improved to encourage the sharing of new and constructive ideas?

   Prepare a memo reporting your findings and recommendations, addressed to a stipulated audience, and based on a thorough audience and use profile. (See pages 386, 387 for more on recommendation reports.)

   NOTE: This assignment might serve as the basis for the major term project (the formal proposal or analytical report, Chapters 23 and 24).

7. Use the questions on page 61 as a basis for interviewing a student from another country. Be prepared to share your findings with the class.

COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS

1. You work for an environmental consulting firm that is under contract with various countries for a range of projects, including these:

   - A plan for rain forest regeneration in Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa
   - A plan to decrease industrial pollution in Eastern and Western Europe
   - A plan for “clean” industries in developing countries
   - A plan for organic agricultural development in Africa and India
   - A joint American/Canadian plan to decrease acid rain
   - A plan for developing alternative energy sources in Southeast Asia

   Each project will require environmental impact statements, feasibility studies, grant proposals, and a legion of other documents, often prepared in collaboration with members of the host country, and in some cases prepared by your company for audiences in the host country—from political, social, and industrial leaders to technical experts and so on.

   For such projects to succeed, people from different cultures have to communicate effectively and sensitively, creating goodwill and cooperation.

   Before your company begins work in earnest with a particular country, your coworkers will need to develop a degree of cultural awareness. Your assignment is to select a country and to research that culture’s behaviors, attitudes, values, and social system in terms of how these variables influence the culture’s communication preferences and expectations. What should your colleagues know about this culture in order to communicate effectively and diplomatically? Do the necessary research using the questions from page 61 as a guide.

   For a useful source of online information about world cultures, consult <http://lcweb2.loc. gov/frd/cs/cshome.html>. The Library of Congress Country Studies site is easy to navigate and provides a wealth of cultural information on over 100 countries. For an excellent source of information on Asian cultures, go to <www.
   asiasource.org>.

   Prepare a recommendation report in memo form (page 397). Be prepared to present your findings in class.
2. Often, workplace readers need to be persuaded to accept recommendations that are controversial or unpopular. This project offers practice in dealing with the persuasion problems of communicating within organizations.

   Divide into teams. Assume that your team agrees strongly about one of these recommendations and is seeking support from classmates and instructors (and administrators, as potential readers) for implementing the recommendations.

Choose One Goal

a. Your campus Writing Center always needs qualified tutors to help first-year composition students with writing problems. On the other hand, students of professional writing need to sharpen their own skill in editing, writing, motivation, and diplomacy. All students in your class, therefore, should be assigned to the Writing Center during the semester’s final half, to serve as tutors for twenty hours (beyond normal course time).

b. To prepare students for communicating in an automated work environment, at least one course assignment (preferably the long report) should be composed,

critiqued, and revised online. Students not yet skilled in HTML will be required to develop the skill by midsemester.

c. This course should help individuals improve at their own level, instead of forcing them to compete with stronger or weaker writers. All grades, therefore, should be Pass/Fail.
d. To prepare for the world of work, students need practice in peer evaluation as well as self-evaluation. Because this textbook provides definite criteria and checklists for evaluating various documents, students should be allowed to grade each other and to grade themselves. These grades should count as heavily as the instructor's grades.
e. In preparation for writing in the workplace, no one should be allowed to limp along, cruising by with minimal performance. This course, therefore, should carry only three possible grades: A, B, or F. Those whose work would otherwise merit a C or D would instead receive an Incomplete and be allowed to repeat the course as often as needed to achieve a B grade.
f. To ensure that all graduates have adequate communication skills for survival in a world in which information is the ultimate product, each student in the college should pass a writing proficiency examination as a graduation requirement.

Analyze Your Audience

Your audience here consists of classmates and instructors (and possibly administrators). From your recent observation of this audience, what reader characteristics can you deduce?

Follow the model in Figure 4.6 for designing a profile sheet to record your audience and use analysis, and to duplicate for use throughout the semester. (Feel free to improve on the design and content of this model.)

Following is one possible set of responses to questions about audience identity and needs for goal (e) from the previous list.

- *Who is my audience?* Classmates and instructors (and possibly some college administrators).
- *How will readers use my information?* Readers will decide whether to support our recommendation for limiting possible grades in this course to three: A, B, or F.
- *How much is the audience likely to know already about this topic?* Everyone here is already a grade expert, and will need no explanation of the present grading system.
- *What else does the audience need to know?* Instructors should need no persuading; they know all about the quality of writing expected in the workplace. But some of our classmates probably will have questions like these: Why should we have to meet such high expectations? How can this grading be fair to the marginal writers? How will I benefit from these tougher requirements? Don't we already have enough work here?

You will have to answer questions by explaining how the issue boils down to "suffering now" or "suffering later," and that one's skill in communication will determine one's career advancement.

Devise a Plan for Achieving Your Goal

From the audience traits you have identified, develop a plan for justifying your recommendation. Express your goal and plan in a statement of purpose. Here is an example for goal (e):

> The purpose of this document is to convince classmates that our recommendation for an A/B/F grading system deserves your support. We will explain how skill in workplace writing affects career advancement, how higher standards for grading would help motivate students, and how our recommendation could be implemented realistically and fairly.

Plan, Draft, and Revise Your Document

Brainstorm (page 107) for worthwhile content, do any research that may be needed, write a draft, and revise as often as needed to produce a document that stands the best chance of connecting with your audience.

Appoint a member of your team to present the finished document (along with a complete audience and use analysis) for class evaluation and response.

SERVICE-LEARNING PROJECT

Just as the cultures of other nations have different values, so too do subcultures within the United States. Write a letter inviting neighborhood residents to an open house at a Latino community center in a predominantly Hispanic neighborhood. What factors influence how you shape and write your invitation? What language(s) would you use? Explain how your persuasive writing is influenced by cultural and linguistic differences.

FIGURE 4.1

Informing and Persuading Both Require Audience Awareness

A claim about what the facts are
A claim about what the facts mean
A claim about what should be done
Claims require support
“What do I want people to be doing or thinking?”
Asking only for a change in thinking
Asking for active support
Asking for direct action
A proposal involves these persuasive tasks
Asking for different behavior

4.1

For more on power
dynamics in the workplace visit <www.ablongman.com/
lannonweb>

TYPICAL AUDIENCE QUESTIONS ABOUT ANY ATTEMPT TO PERSUADE

- *Says who?*
- *So what?*
- *Why should I?*
- *Why rock the boat?*
- *What’s in this for me?*
- *What will it cost?*
- *What are the risks?*
- *What are you up to?*
- *What’s in it for you?*
- *What does this really mean?*
- *Will it mean more work for me?*
- *Will it make me look bad?*

We rely on persuasion to help us make up our minds
Why persuasion is so difficult
Some ways of yielding to persuasion are more productive than others

FIGURE 4.2

The Levels of Response to Persuasion

JOB...

JOB...

ON THE

FIGURE 4.3 Three Strategies for Connecting with an Audience Instead of intimidating people, try to appeal to the relationship or—better yet—appeal to people's intelligence as well.

Orders readers to show up
Invites readers to participate
Leaves the choice to the reader

4.2

For more on the politics of memo writing visit
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lannonweb>

Presents authoritative evidence
Offers alternatives
Offers a compromise
Leaves the choice to the reader

Offers incentives

How to promote your view

How to respond to opposing views

Spell out what you want

Stick with what is achievable

JOB...

JOB...

ON THE

Communication constraints in the workplace

Decide carefully when to say what to whom

Wrong way to the wrong person

A better way to the right person

Major legal constraints on communication

4.3

FOR MORE ON PUBLIC
RELATIONS AND LEGAL
LIABILITIES VISIT
<WWW.ABLONGMAN.COM/
LANNONWEB>

JOB...

JOB...

on the

“WHAT’S OUR RELATIONSHIP?”

“HOW RECEPTIVE IS THIS AUDIENCE?”

“HOW UNIFIED IS THIS AUDIENCE?”

“WHERE ARE PEOPLE COMING FROM ON THIS?”

CONSIDER THIS PEOPLE OFTEN REACT EMOTIONALLY TO PERSUASIVE APPEALS

We’ve all been on the receiving end of attempts to influence our thinking:

- *You need this product!*
- *This deal beats the competitor’s deal!*
- *This candidate is the one to vote for!*
- *Try doing things this way!*
- *Donate to this good cause!*

How, exactly, do we decide which persuasive appeals to accept or reject?

One way is by evaluating the argument itself, by asking *Does the argument supporting this claim make good sense? Is it balanced and fair?*

But arguments rarely succeed or fail on their own merits. Researchers have identified common emotional factors that influence our receptiveness to persuasion.

Why We Say No

Management expert Edgar Schein outlines various fears that prevent people from trying or learning something new (34–39):

- Fear of the unknown: *Why rock the boat? (Change can be scary, and so we cling to old, familiar ways of doing things, even when those ways aren’t working.)*
- Fear of disruption: *Who needs these headaches? (We resist change if it seems too complicated or troublesome.)*
- Fear of failure: *Suppose I screw up? (We worry about the shame or punishment that might result from making errors.)*

To overcome these basic fears, Schein explains, people need to feel “psychologically safe”:

> ...they have to see a manageable path forward, a direction that will not be catastrophic. They have to feel that a change will not jeopardize their current sense of identity and wholeness. They must feel that new habits are possible, that they can...try out new things without fear of punishment. (59)

Any effective argument for change must include such types of reassurance.

Why We Say Yes

Social psychologist Robert Cialdini pinpoints six subjective criteria that move people to accept a persuasive appeal (76–81):

- Reciprocation: *Do I owe this person a favor? (We feel obligated—and we look for the chance—to reciprocate, or return, a good deed.)*
- Consistency: *Have I made some earlier commitment along these lines? (We like to see ourselves as behaving consistently. Cialdini notes that people who have declared even minor support for a particular position [say by signing a petition], will tend to accept future requests for major support of that position [say, a financial contribution].)*
- Social validation: *What are other people saying about this argument? Are they agreeing or disagreeing? (We usually feel reassured by going along with our peers.)*

- Liking: *Do I like the person making the argument? (We are far more receptive to people we like—and often more willing to accept a bad argument from a likable person than a good one from an unlikable person!)*
- Authority: *How knowledgeable does this person seem about the issue? (We place confidence in experts and authorities.)*
- Scarcity: *Does this person know (or have) something that others don't? (The scarcer something seems, the more we value it [say, a hot tip about the stock market].)*

Sales professionals know very well how these criteria apply: A typical sales pitch, for example, might include a "free sample of our most popular brand, which is nearly sold out" offered by a chummy salesperson full of "expert" details about the item itself.

While an ethical persuader's appeal to these criteria often enhances a legitimate argument, Cialdini warns of exploitation by unethical persuaders, as when a phony doctor in a TV commercial makes "authoritative" claims about some brand of medication.

Cross-Cultural Differences

To show how different cultures often weigh these various criteria differently, Cialdini (81) cites a recent survey of Citibank employees in four countries (United States, China, Spain, and Germany) by Stanford researchers Morris, Podolny, and Ariel. When asked by a coworker for help with a task, U.S. bank employees felt obligated to comply, or reciprocate, if they owed that person a favor. Employees in the Chinese bank were influenced mostly by the requester's status, or authority, while Spanish employees based their decision mainly on liking and friendship, regardless of the requester's status. German employees were motivated mainly by a sense of consistency in following the bank's official rules: If the rules stipulated they should help coworkers, they felt compelled to do so.

(continues)

Consider This (continued)

A persuasive case offers reasons that matter to the audience

Persuasive challenges

"I spend much of my time trying to persuade people that the information we offer can help them. Managers have to be persuaded that your recommendations are worthwhile and the best way to go. Clerical staff want to know, 'Will this help me keep my job?'"

—Blair Cordasco, training specialist
for an international bank

JOB...

JOB...

ON THE

Criteria for worthwhile evidence

Offer the facts

Cite the numbers

Show what you mean

Cite the experts

"What makes these people tick?"

Appeal to shared goals

Appeal to shared values

How cultural differences govern a persuasive situation

4.4

For more on global communication visit
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Face saving is every person's bottom line

How people lose face

4.5

For more on
ethnocentrism and
cultural difference visit
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lannonweb>

[1]Adapted from Beamer 293-95; Gesteland 24; Hulbert, ''Overcoming'' 42; Jameson 9-11; Kohl et al. 65; Martin and Chaney 271-77; Nydell 61; Thatcher 193-94; Thrush 276-77; Victor 159-66.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYZING CULTURAL DIFFERENCES*

What behavior does the culture consider acceptable?

- *Casual versus formal interaction*
- *Directness and plain talk versus indirectness and ambiguity*
- *Rapid decision making versus extensive analysis and discussion*
- *Willingness to request clarification*
- *Willingness to argue, criticize, or disagree*
- *Willingness to be contradicted*
- *Willingness to express emotion*

What values does the culture consider most important?

- *Attitude toward big business, competition, and U.S. culture*
- *Youth versus age*
- *Rugged individualism versus group loyalty*
- *Status of women in the workplace*
- *Feelings versus logic*
- *Candor versus face saving*
- *Progress and risk taking versus stability*
- *Importance of trust and relationship building*
- *Importance of time ("Time is money!" or "Never rush!")*
- *Preference for oral versus written communication*

*Adapted from Beamer 293–95; Gesteland 24; Hulbert, "Overcoming" 42; Jameson 9–11; Kohl et al. 65; Martin and Chaney 271–77; Nydell 61; Thatcher 193–94; Thrush 276–77; Victor 159–66.

FIGURE 4.4 Shaping a Clear Line of Thought Give the audience a clear and logical path, but remember that no argument rigidly follows the order of elements shown here.

FIGURE 4.5 Supporting a Claim with Good Reasons

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FIGURE 4.5 Supporting a Claim with Good Reasons *(continued)*

FIGURE 4.6 Audience and Use Profile Sheet for Figure 4.5

GUIDELINES for Making Your Case

In any attempt at persuasion, the **audience** is your main focus. Whenever you set out to influence someone's thinking, remember this:

> **No matter how brilliant, any argument rejected by its audience is a failed argument.**

If people dislike you or decide that what you say has no meaning for them personally, they reject your argument outright. Instead of insisting that audiences see things your way, try to see things from their perspective.

Analyze the Situation

1. *Assess the political climate.* Whom will this affect? How will people react? How will they interpret your motives? Can you be outspoken? Could the argument cause legal problems? To avoid backlash:
   - Be aware of your status in the group; don't overstep.
   - Don't expect perfection from anyone—including yourself.
   - Don't make anyone look bad, lose face, or feel coerced.
   - Never fake certainty or make promises you can't keep.
   - Ask directly for support: "Is this idea worthy of your commitment?" (Senge 7).
   - Build support by inviting intended readers—especially the group opinion makers—to review early drafts.

   When reporting something that others do not want to hear, expect fallout. Decide beforehand whether you want to keep your job (or status) or your dignity. (See Chapter 5 for more on ethics.)
2. *Learn the unspoken rules.* Know the constraints (especially the legal ones) on what you can say to whom and how and when. Consider the cultural context.
3. *Decide on a connection (or combination of connections).* Should you require compliance, or appeal to a relationship or to common sense and reason?
4. *Anticipate audience reaction.* Will people be defensive, shocked, annoyed, angry? Try to neutralize major objections beforehand. Express your judgments on the issue ("We could do better") without blaming people ("It's all your fault").

Develop a Clear and Credible Plan

1. *Define your precise goal.* Develop the clearest possible view of what you want to see happen.
2. *Think your idea through.* Are there any holes in this argument? Will it stand up under scrutiny?
3. *Do your homework.* Be sure your facts are straight and your figures are accurate.
4. *Never make a claim or ask for something you know people will reject outright.* Get a realistic sense about what is achievable in this particular situation by asking what people are thinking. Invite them to share in decision making. Offer real choices.

Prepare Your Case

1. *Be clear about what you want.* Diplomacy is important—especially in cross-cultural communication—but don't leave people guessing about your purpose.
2. *Project a likable and reasonable persona.* Persona is the image or impression you project in your tone and diction. Audiences are wondering "What do I think about the person making the argument?" "Do I like and trust this person?" "Does this person seem to know what he or she is talking about?" "Is this person trying to make me look stupid?"

Audiences tune out aggressive people—no matter how sensible the argument. Resist the urge to preach, to "sound off," or to be sarcastic. Admit the imperfections or uncertainty in your case. Invite people to respond. A little humility never hurts.

3. *Find points of agreement with your audience.* What does everyone involved want? To reduce conflict, focus early on a shared value, goal, or experience. Emphasize your similarities. Pat deserving people on the back.
4. *Never distort the opposing position.* A sure way to alienate people is to cast the opponent in a more negative light than the facts warrant.
5. *Concede* ***something*** *to the opposing position.* Reasonable people respect an argument that is fair and balanced. Admit the merits of the opposing case before arguing for your own. Show empathy and willingness to compromise. Encourage people to air their own views.
6. *Don't merely criticize.* If you're arguing that something is wrong, be sure you can offer realistic suggestions for making it right.
7. *Stick to claims you can support.* Show people what's in it for them—but never distort the facts just to please the audience. Be honest about the risks.
8. *Stick to your best material.* Not all points are equal. Decide which material—from your audience's view—best advances your case.

Present Your Case

1. *Before releasing the document, get a second opinion.* Ask a reader you trust and who has no stake in the issue. If possible, have your company's legal department approve the document.
2. *Get the timing right.* When will your case most likely fly—or crash and burn? What else is going on that could influence people's reactions? Look for a good opening.
3. *Decide on the appropriate medium.* Given the specific issue and audience, should you communicate in person, via hard copy, phone, email, intranet, fax, newsletter, bulletin board? (See also page 52.) Should all recipients receive your message via the same medium? If your written message is likely to surprise readers, try to warn them face-to-face or by phone.
4. *Be sure everyone involved receives a copy.* People hate being left out of the loop—especially when any "change" that affects them is being discussed.
5. *Invite responses.* After people have had a chance to consider your argument, gauge their reactions by asking them directly.
6. *Don't be defensive about negative reactions.* Instead, admit mistakes, invite people to improve on your ideas, and try to build support (Bashein and Marcus 43).
7. *Know when to back off.* If you seem to be "hitting the wall," don't push. Consider trying again later or even dropping the whole effort. People who feel they have been bullied or deceived will likely become your enemies.

(continues)

Guidelines (continued)

CHECKLIST for Cross-Cultural Documents

Use this checklist to verify that your documents respect audience diversity. (Page numbers in parentheses refer to the first page of discussion.)*

- Does the document allow everyone to save face? (60)
- Is the document sensitive to the culture's customs and values? (60)
- Does the document conform to the safety and regulatory standards of the country? (00)
- Does the document provide the expected level of detail? (39)
- Does the document avoid possible mis-
interpretation? (38)
- Is the document organized in a way that readers will consider appropriate? (227)
- Does the document observe interpersonal conventions important to the culture (accepted forms of greeting or introduction, politeness requirements, first names,
titles, and so on)? (59)
- Does the document's tone reflect the appropriate level of formality or casualness? (60)
- Is the document's style appropriately direct or indirect? (60)
- Is the document's format consistent with the culture's expectations? (360)
- Does the document embody universal standards for ethical communication? (81)
- Should the document be supplemented, if possible, by direct, face-to-face communication? (68)

*This list was largely adapted from Caswell-Coward 265; Weymouth 144; Beamer 293–95; Martin and Chaney 271–77; Thatcher 193–94; Victor 159–61.

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