

Success during the Depression

Drubeck Brothers

One of the Drubeck Brothers pretended to be deaf. When a customer asked for a suit, he would pretend he couldn't hear clearly, and so the customer would repeat it more loudly. He would take him to select a suit, and when the customer asks for a price, the other brother would then appear and tell the customer the price, for instance, \$60. And the supposedly hearing impaired brother would say, "You heard him, it's \$16 dollars". Thus the customer would take the suit, pay for it, and get out of the place as soon as possible. What they are doing is taking advantage of the stereotype of the brain.

The human brain can be lazy and create a stereotype when it's trying to take a shortcut to avoid processing certain information. Whenever it encounters a situation or a decision to be made, it would rely on a stereotype.

The stereotype that the brothers were using was "Costly equals to good".

How Ellen Langer got greater (Mindfulness Project)

She was trying to figure out if it was possible for her to get ahead of a queue. In the control group, she approached the group and asked them if she may go ahead of them. 60% of them allowed her to move ahead. In the experimental group, she said, "May I please go ahead because I am in a hurry". There was no difference between either groups, but her success in the experimental group was a 94%.

If you have a request to make, do provide a reason for it, so you will have a higher rate of success.

Scientifically Proven Techniques of Influence & Persuasion

Technique 1: Contrast

Retail Sales and Real Estate both uses this technique widely.

The broker will show you a sub-par and expensive house, followed by a good house in a bad neighbourhood but more expensive, and finally, a good house and a good neighbourhood but a lot more than what you're willing to pay. Because of the contrast, you are willing to pay more for that last choice.

Economist

Subscribe at economist.com at \$59, or a print and online version for \$125. But they then ran a second advertisement, where the first option is online subscription for \$59, print subscription for \$124, and both formats for \$125. The choice is clear here.

Technique 2: Reject-Retreat-Repeat

Youth Counselling

When you are proposing a large request and it gets rejected, do not pursue further but propose a small request. The probability of acceptance of the smaller request is higher.

In an experiment where researchers approached a group of participants to request that they give up 8 hours for one weekend to counsel delinquent children, the rate of acceptance was 17%. But in a separate experiment with another group of participants, the researcher began with a huge request of 8 hours a weekend for the whole year, the rate of acceptance was 0%. When followed up with the same first request, the rate of acceptance rose sharply to 54%.

Encyclopaedia Sales

1. Will you buy the whole set?
2. How about just A to L?
3. How about just the book that starts with A?
4. Can you recommend a friend to me who might be interested?

Technique 3: Reciprocity

The Dennis Regan Art Experiment

Humans are inherently programmed to be reciprocal. Dennis Regan requested volunteers for an art appreciation workshop. In the control group, he paired each volunteer with an assistant. They walked through an art exhibition and rated the pieces. Halfway through the exhibition, the assistant excused himself and returned with a can of coke. In the experimental group, the assistant returned with an additional coke for the volunteer too.

In both cases, at the end of the experiment, the assistant tried to sell tickets to a charity to the volunteer. In the first case, there was no reciprocity, in the second case, the reciprocity was 300% more in terms of the purchase of these tickets.

ISKCON Method

At the US Airport, ISKCON volunteers would wait at the arrival hall, and give them a gift and said this is for you. They followed up with a request for them to donate, and they did. After some time, people knew what was going on, and they just left the rose on the floor. ISKCON responded by replacing the rose with an American flag. No one wanted to leave the flag on the floor.

Technique 4: Social Validation

Success of Albert Bandura

The principle of social validation says that people are more likely to do something that others are doing. Albert Bandura has been immensely successful at curing phobias in children & adults.

Albert Bandura when approached by parents who complained their child was afraid of dogs, would first put them in a room to screen a movie where it showed children playing with dogs, then he brought the child to a playground where children were playing with dogs in a pen, finally, he brought

the kid into the pen to play with dogs. It reinforces the idea that it is perfectly okay and safe to play with dogs as others were doing it too. When he left the child alone to play with dogs, their phobia was cured.

Advances in Energy Savings

Alex Laskey divided the city into groups, in the first group of 25% of the population, he sent a message to them that said, "Switch off electrical appliance and save \$54 a month", in the second group, "Save the environment, use less electricity", and in the next group, the message was "Be a good citizen, prevent blackouts by using less electricity". In the final group, the message was, "77% of your neighbours are using less electricity" and the next month's bill contained the message, "People like you have electricity bills that are 37% less than yours". In the final group, the city experience huge electrical savings.

Technique 5: Commitment & Consistency

If a person has made a commitment to a cause, then it is likely that he will act consistently with the cause.

Sherman's Cancer Society Experiment

In the control group, Sherman asked if they would donate to the American Cancer Society, and some did respond. Sherman first called people to ask if they support the work of the American Cancer Society. A week later, he called to ask if there was an opportunity to help the cancer society, would they do it? Everyone said yes, and that they would donate. What he did was to build commitment in their minds, and with a follow-up call, they acted consistently with that commitment.

Unannounced restaurant cancellations

There was a problem of people cancelling their reservations and that also resulted in loss of customers who waited in line and left the place, hence loss of revenue. They brought in experts to help solve this problem, and their solution was to add two words to their reservation process. Instead of saying, "Please call if you have to cancel your reservation", say, "Will you please call if you have to cancel your reservation?" This helped to build commitment on the part of the customer, and they can better gauge the demand at night.

Forms of Commitment

Mental
Verbal
Written
Public Written

In ascending order in terms of the strength of commitment.

Question:

Your friend is interviewing with two companies who are competitors, say P&G and Unilever, concurrently. Of the options below, which one should he choose to maximise his chances of getting hired?

A: Let both hiring managers know that he is interviewing with a potential rival; they may appreciate the honesty

B: Don't reveal the fact to the hiring managers as it may make them insecure

C: Revealing this data is inconsequential

A is the best option as it uses the principle of social validation. Let the respective hiring managers know that people like them are considering you, and so should themselves.

Technique 6: Scarcity

A company that sold beef hired academic researchers to find out how to increase their sales. They divided their customers into 3 groups. In the first group, they provided a standard sales pitch, best quality, cheapest value etc. In the next group, they used the standard pitch, but added that due to mad cow disease in Europe, beef will be in shortage the next few weeks, and sales rose dramatically. In the third group, they used the same pitch as in the second group, but they informed the customers that this piece of information is only revealed to a handful of people only. Sales rose by 600%.

Sir Earnest Shackleton

The ship's crew was stuck in an ice flow for a long time. The biggest challenge here is the disease scurvy and Shackleton did not want to lose any men. In the sea, seals provide the vitamins required to prevent scurvy, but seal meat tasted horrible. He stuck a notice on the ship that said, "Seal meat will only be available to officers". There were very few officers on the ship and Shackleton had been known to treat his men very fairly. The men felt unjust and so demanded seal meat as well. Shackleton created scarcity when there was none and prevented death of his men.

Consulting firms

Consulting firms do the same thing, they put a deadline on a price to push organizations to hurry and sign the contract, thinking that there might be a change in price beyond the deadline.

Technique 7: Authority

Stanley Milgram Experiment

He requested volunteers for an experiment. He made a volunteer a teacher, another a student. The student was then required to memorise a list of words. They were then separated, and the student's hands were connected to wires, as long as he recited it correctly, nothing happens. However, if there is a mistake, an electric shock would be applied and increased gradually with each mistake. When there was a person of authority who told the teacher it was okay, the teacher applied very high voltage nonetheless. The experiment showed that, if you are in a position of authority, then you can get your request accepted easily.

Rectal ear ache?

Doctors and nurses often have comparable knowledge in the field, however, nurses would defer to the authority of the doctor even if the doctor may have made a mistake. In a case, a patient experienced pain in his ear, the doctor diagnosed it as a simple ear infection, and wrote in his

prescription slip for an antibiotic drop, and the note said, "Two drops in the R ear" which was supposed to mean "Right Ear", but the nurse thought it meant "rear".

Summary

1. Justification (Ellen Langer)
2. Contrast
3. Reject-Retreat-Repeat
4. Reciprocity
5. Social Validation
6. Commitment & Consistency
7. Scarcity
8. Authority