



Thanks for your interest in digging in a little deeper into Pre-Suasion and our conversation with Dr. Robert Cialdini. He spoke with a group of 50+ Fractional Chief Marketing Officers with Chief Outsiders and responded to a series of questions that certainly apply to our work, but the principles discussed are universal. **Enjoy!**

## 1. How does pre-suasion apply in a continuous sales cycle (services) from discovery through contracting and service delivery, leading to the next sale, where different personalities, relationships and client fit play key roles at every stage in the process?

**Robert Cialdini (RC):** This is the right question, because it focuses on the proper answer for employing pre-suasion. And that is, at every stage in the process we have to think about what our goal is for every new client – we have to think about what our goal is for that client – what every existing history with that client might be. All of those things tell us what we should be focusing on in each stage. So let's take these stages one at a time:

### The first is discovery

Identifying good opportunities for interaction – where we interact at initial levels with a client or a customer. One of the things that technology has given us is the ability to identify the features of that customer/client that vendor that might be consistent with some of the things we have in common with them. People tell us on LinkedIn, on social media, all kinds of things about them. We should, before we ever contact an individual, do that discovery to identify what traits or interests that client/customer might have that we share, raise those to the surface and we have pre-suaded that person to be attentive and sympathetic to us because there is a commonality.

There is a study that I saw that in negotiations where bargainers have failed negotiations where they can't come to a decision 30% of the time. If, instead, they are asked to send information back and forth to one another before the negotiation begins, where they can identify common interests or backgrounds or hobbies, the percent of stymied negotiations drops from 30% to 6%, just by identifying a commonality ahead of time, bringing it to consciousness and then proceeding with the negotiation. So, at discovery, that's possible.

## **How about at the Contracting level?**

Where we've now gotten to a stage where we're proposing a particular program of service for them and there is a budget that we provide. Let's say that we have a budget that we provide that will cover our services – we do our homework and find out that the budget would be \$75,078. Of course, we round that off and say that we will be able to this for you for \$75,000. That's a mistake. Because if we give the precise number, \$75,078, we establish ourselves as credible communicators about the cost of that project. If you have done your homework and you come up with \$75,078, make that part of your budget. Here's what the research shows – people will be more likely to accept that budget even though it's higher because it was a precise number. The precise number tells them that “these people have done their homework; they know what they are talking about; this is a credible source about this.” You are going to get the same pushback as if you had said \$75,000 and that sounds like some pie in the sky number that you just pulled out of the air. And how is that pre-suasive? Put that budget at the top of your proposal so that you are established as a knowledgeable credible source of information from the outset. You've done your homework. You're entitled to that perception to the extent that it is true.

Remember back in high school or college when you were taking math classes or science classes and the teacher would say on the exam, “don't just give me answers, show me your work, show me how you got to that answer”. That's going to convince me that you know what you are talking about. That's what I am asking you to do with precise budget numbers. Show your work. You've earned it.

## **How about when you have delivered the service?**

How do we get to the next stage? We typically ask our existing customers, those who have experienced our service to give us some information – some feedback – about how well we did. We will ask them for a survey so we can better our next interaction with them and know what are strengths were in the previous interaction. This is absolutely what we should be doing, but there is a mistake in the way we ask for that feedback. Typically, we ask for their opinion about how we did. You know what the research shows? When we ask someone for an opinion, that person takes a ½ step back from us psychologically. There is a separation – they go into themselves – they introspect – and we have created a separation. If instead, we ask for their advice rather than their opinion, they take a half step toward us because they become partners with us in providing advice. They become collaborators with us. The research shows that they will be more supportive of us, more loyal to us and more likely to seek our services in the future if we ask them for advice on how to improve our services rather than their opinion. That one word makes a difference.

## **The question goes on - where different personalities, relationships and client fit play key roles at every stage in the process...**

We have to be sure that with every individual we know what we can do ahead of time to make that person feel a rapport with us. Here is an example that I heard from one of my business partners. This is a woman who handles my speaking and consulting engagements overseas. She sets up opportunities for me to speak with various clients for me and others and she says there is one particular client who is renowned in the industry as being a slow pay. This person would wait to pay at least six months on average. And she says that all of her friends in the industry say the same thing about this guy. You send an invoice and you have to pester him for 6 months before you get your money. She found out, by going on the Internet, that this guy is an art lover. So now, before she sends any invoice, she goes to her local art museum and she buys a postcard with a piece of art on it that's present there at that museum that he wouldn't see in his city and sends it to him. She says she has cut the time to pay in half – from 6 months to 3 months – by sending along with the invoice something that resonated with him – that personalized the relationship. I got a call from her last month and she said that she had cut it in half again. You know how? She found out that he is an aficionado of modern art, so now she goes to the museum of modern art in her city and sends a postcard from a modern art exhibit and now she is the first one paid. None of her friends can understand – she's not telling them why. She gets paid in a month and a half and they have to wait 6 months – it's pre-suasion. It's what accompanied the invoice before he opened it.

It's the same was as the study about what you see on your website – change how people respond before they open the information on your website.

So that is how I would approach this problem going at each of these stages – you have to think about the stage as different from the last stage and what is appropriate for it.

## **2. Given our role in marketing/consulting with small to mid-sized technology companies, what is the one piece of advice about how to apply Pre-Suasion?**

**RC:** It is not to go first to the moment before your message, but rather to go to your message and determine what is your goal with this message. You have to think differently about each message you are about to send in terms of what your goal is. What is the element of this message that you want your recipient to most resonate with, and then you reverse engineer the process. Now you go to the moment ahead of the message, armed with that knowledge of what is your goal and put an image, a slogan, an adage, a metaphor – something that is relevant to that strength, your goal, in the moment before.

Let me give you an example. I got an email a couple of months ago from a man who said he had read Pre-Suasion and used it to significantly increase the amount of contributions he gets to the Boy Scouts. He has two sons who are Boy Scouts and one of the things they would do is sell popcorn outside supermarkets. You know, as people would come out of the store, there is a table and he and his sons were sitting behind the table and they would say, as people came out of the store “would you like to buy some popcorn?” People had just spent their budgets, if they wanted some popcorn they could have bought it in the store and he was only getting about 15% compliance with that request. Then he read Pre-Suasion and he said oh yeah, wait a minute, what I want to pre-suade people to do is not to buy popcorn, it’s to support the Boy Scouts. So now when they exit he says we asked, “do you support the Boy Scouts?” And he gets 75% to say yes – the goal was not to sell popcorn, the goal was to support the boy scouts. That’s what needed to be placed in front of them the moment before they considered whether or not they wanted that popcorn. You resonate inside them with the goal that you have and that is what wins the day.

### **3. How does a prescriptive Pre-Suasion approach fit in a relationship focused world and how is different from how it fits with service delivery?**

**RC:** Let’s talk about something that has recently occurred to me to use. If you have read anything by me before Pre-Suasion, you would know that there is a new universal principle of influence – it’s not really new but it is new to my thinking – the principle of unity or togetherness. If we can absolutely identify that we have an existing relationship with individuals – individuals we have membership with in a group or we are part of an ongoing bonded relationship with them, everything gets easier inside the influence process.

So here is what happened to me a while ago. I was writing a report that needed to be submitted the next day and I realized that I was missing some information for one section of the report – I didn’t have it in my files. But I knew I had a colleague who had done a research project and he had that information here in the Psychology department at my university. So, I sent him an email saying, “Tom, look, I’ve got this deadline for a report due tomorrow. I don’t have the data I need to finish one section, but I know you’ve got it in your files. I am going to call you and ask you if you can help me with this.” So I did. I made the call after I let the email sit for a couple of minutes. And, this is a guy who is known for being an irascible sour personality – not a guy who suffers fools gladly. He calls you to task. He said, “Bob, I know why you are calling and the answer is no. You’re a busy man, but I’m a busy man. I’ve got my own deadlines and I can’t be responsible for your poor time management skills.” And if it had been before I read the research on unity, here’s what I would have said: “Come on Tom. I really need this. I would appreciate if you could do this for me.” Instead, I said. “You know, Tom, we have been in the same psychology department for 12 years. I really need this. I would

appreciate if you could do this for me.” I had the information that afternoon. I had begun by putting in his mind the concept of unity.

How many customers do you have that you have a long term relationship with? That is important to bring to the surface before you begin any negotiation with them – before you send any offer to them. Because inside the boundaries of that existing relationship people say yes because they are in a relationship with you. There are all kinds of security, there is all kinds of trust that comes from interacting with people in your units. Where we have that, we would be fools of the influence process not to raise to raise it to consciousness pre-suasively before we begin. We earn that.

#### **4. How do you translate Pre-Suasion into a technology/digital world?**

RC: We’ve already talked about what’s the first thing that you put on your website. What’s the first thing they see? And how is it relevant to the strength you have to offer – and that might be different depending on which segment of your customer base you want – if you’ve got people, millennials for example – you know what is the biggest thing for them? – scarcity. FOMO – who knows what FOMO means? Fear of missing out. That’s what should be on the website – some scarcity relevant thing – like a ticking clock. There is a study done by Royal Caribbean that showed for a limited time offer, if they had ticking clocks in the subject line of an email that presented that offer, they got 15% more click-throughs which produce a several hundred percent increase in profits from that offer by aligning the essence/purpose of that offer was with the first thing that they saw in the subject line of the email was a ticking clock. It readied them for a time limited offer and they followed through on it.

#### **Final Thoughts:**

##### **Is there one last idea that you would leave us with?**

RC: Let’s go with this unity issue. I know that you are all always involved with some kind of negotiation. I had a business client that we had had previous difficult negotiations with and it was time to renew our contract. In the past when we had done that, we had difficult negotiations. It was time for the next one. We went to their offices (my negotiation team), we got to the meeting room early. And here is what I would have done before I wrote Pre-Suasion. We would have aligned ourselves on one side of the table. And the other negotiating team would have come in and aligned themselves on the other side of the table, creating the pre-suasive geography/psychology of separation and opposition. Instead, I asked my team to take every other chair around the table. When the other side came in they stopped short at the door, but they didn’t order us “hey, get to your side of the table”. They sat among us. It was the psychology of unity. It was the best negotiation I could have imagined. Because we started out pre-suasively, with the image of togetherness and unity and integration rather than separation. You can do that too.

**If you are ready to dive into Pre-Suasion, here are some additional links:**

**Pre-Suasion website:** <https://www.influenceatwork.com/book/>. Bulk discounts are available for Pre-Suasion as well as Dr. Cialdini's other books. Contact [cara@influenceatwork.com](mailto:cara@influenceatwork.com) for more information.

**INFLUENCE AT WORK website:** For information about bringing Dr. Cialdini in to speak to their organization or for information about workshops based on Dr. Cialdini's research: <https://www.influenceatwork.com/>.

**Facebook** - <https://www.facebook.com/robert.cialdini/>

**Twitter** - <https://twitter.com/RobertCialdini>

**LinkedIn** - <https://www.linkedin.com/company-beta/2049141/>

**YouTube** - <https://www.youtube.com/user/influenceatwork>

**Inside Influence Report** - <https://www.influenceatwork.com/inside-influence-report/>



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