



PRE-SUASION: A Revolutionary Way to Influence & Persuade

by Robert Cialdini Ph.D.



Overview

This book, written by the author of [Influence](#), describes a scientific approach to persuasion, known as “pre”-suasion. The general principle is to create “privileged moments” by putting someone into a desired mental state prior to asking for a request, in order to increase the odds of compliance. This includes putting them in the right mood, priming them with certain numbers, or to predispose them to considering themselves helpful.

“The basic idea of pre-suasion is that by guiding preliminary attention strategically, it’s possible for a communicator to move recipients into agreement with a message before they experience it.”

PART 1: PRE-SUASION: THE FRONTLOADING OF ATTENTION

Chapter 1. Pre-Suasion: An Introduction

The highest-achieving compliance professionals (marketers, salespeople, etc.) spend a lot of preparation time crafting what they do and say before making a request. Whatever is presented first has a cascading effect, changing how people experience whatever is presented next. And while no persuasive tactic will work 100% of the time, some approaches significantly increase the likelihood of compliance.

Openers are techniques used to increase the likelihood of compliance before a request is made, initiating the process of influence by removing existing persuasion barriers in others’ minds. This book is also different from the author’s other book *Influence* (click [here](#) to view our summary of it) because it focuses heavily on the scientific research behind persuasion instead of anecdotal accounts. The science-based evidence in this book emphasizes both *what* to say and *when* to say it.

The core concept is “*privileged moments*”, in which pre-suasive actions produce temporary receptiveness in others to increase the probability of compliance.

Chapter 2. Privileged Moments

“In deciding whatever possibility is correct, people typically look for hits rather than misses; for confirmations of the idea rather than for disconfirmations.”

In one study, researchers approached people to ask for assistance with a survey. When people were simply asked to take the survey, 29% consented. However, when people were first asked, “Do you consider yourself a helpful person?” (most answered yes), 77% complied. This experiment reveals the dominant scientific model of influence: “If you wish to change another’s behavior, you must first change some existing feature of that person so that it fits with the behavior.”

Thus, first alter what’s prominent in a person’s mind (e.g. whether they believe themselves to be helpful) before asking for a decision. Often, the guiding factor is whatever is most *recently* recalled, not necessarily the *wisest* factor. As we can only pay attention to one thing at a time, our brain prioritizes recency.

Chapter 3. The Importance of Attention... Is Importance

“Anything that draws focused attention to itself can lead observers to overestimate its importance.”

We usually assume that whatever we are focusing on in the moment is especially important, simply because it’s the most relevant to that moment. Thus, persuaders who draw attention to the most favorable features of an offer are often successful.

An example is online banner ads. One study demonstrated that while reading an article, the readers’ repeated exposure to a banner ad for a new brand of camera made them significantly more favorable to the ad when shown it again later. They never actually processed the ad consciously, so did not have their guards up or consider it to be tedious or untrustworthy. Thus “seemingly dismissible information presented in

