Pre-Suasion: A Revolutionary Way to Influence and Persuade

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Author's Note

Consultants are taught to gain a client's business by first attaining the status of "trusted advisor". Dale Carnegie assured us, "You can make more friends in two months by becoming genuinely interested in other people than you can in two years by trying to get people interested in you." All wise counsel. But there's a drawback: days, weeks, or months of prior activity are required.

Pre-Suasion: The Frontloading of Attention

Pre-Suasion

The highest achievers spent more time crafting what they did and said *before* making a request.

...they didn't rely on the legitimate merits of an offer to get it accepted; they recognized that the psychological frame in which an appeal is first placed can carry equal or even greater weight.

Their responsibility was to present it most productively. To accomplish that, they did something that gave them a singular kind of persuasive traction: before introducing their message, they arranged to make their audience sympathetic to it.

Although he stumbled onto it, my friend is not alone in experiencing the remarkable effects of merely launching a large number into the air and, consequently, into the minds of others. Researchers have found that the amount of money people said they'd be willing to spend on dinner went up when the restaurant was named Studio 97, as opposed to Studio 17; that the price individuals would pay for a box of Belgian chocolates grew after they'd been asked to write down a pair of high (versus low) digits from their Social Security numbers; the participants in a study of work performance predicted their effort and output would be better when the study happened to be labeled experiment twenty-seven (versus experiment nine); and that observers' estimates of an athlete's performance increased if he wore a high (versus low) number of his jersey.

What's more, the potent impact of what goes first isn't limited to big initial numbers. Other researchers have shown that just after drawing a set of long lines on a sheet of paper, college students estimated the length of the Mississippi River as much greater than those who had just drawn a set of short lines. In fact, the impact of what goes first isn't limited to numerics at all: customers in a wine shop were more likely to purchase a German vintage if, before their choice, they'd heard a German song playing on the shop's sound system; similarly, they were more likely to purchase a French vintage if they'd heard a French song playing.

I watched Jim make three presentations. Each time, his "forgetfulness" surfaced in the same way and at the same point. On the drive back to the office later that evening, I asked him about it. Twice, he wouldn't give me a straight answer, annoyed that I was pressing to discover his selling secret. But when I persisted, he blurted, "Think, Bob: Who do you let walk and out of your house on their own? Only somebody you trust, right? I want to be associated with trust in those families' minds."

It was a brilliant trick - not an entirely ethical one, but brilliant nonetheless - because it embodied one of the central assertions of this book: the truly influential things we say and do first act to *pre-suade* our audience, our audience, which they accomplish by altering audience members' associations with what we do or say next.

Part 2: Processes: The Role of Association
Chapter 8. Persuasive Geographies: All the Right Places, All the Right Traces

...young women do better on science, math, and leadership tasks if assigned to rooms with cues (photos, for example) of women known to have mastered the tasks

Chapter 2: Privileged Moments
Not Hocus, Not Pocus, But Focus

There's a very human reason for why you'd be prone to fall for my trick. Its obtuse scientific name is "positive test strategy." But it comes down to this: in deciding whether a possibility is correct, people typically look for hits rather than misses; for confirmations of the idea rather than for disconfirmations. It is easier to register the presence of something than its absence.

Target Chuting

We have all experienced something similar when a clipboard-carrying researcher stops us in a shopping mall or

supermarket and asks for a few minutes of our time. As is the case for the typical shopping mall requester, these scientists' success was dismal: only 29 percent of those asked to participate consented. But Bolkan and Andersen thought they could boost compliance without resorting to any of the costly payments that marketers often feel forced to employ. They stopped a second sample of individuals and began the interaction with a pre-suasive opener: "Do you consider yourself a helpful person?" Following brief reflection, nearly everyone answered yes. In that privileged moment - after subjects had confirmed privately and affirmed publicly their helpful natures - the researchers pounced, requesting help with their survey. Now 77.3 percent volunteered.

In chapter 10, we'll explore the particular psychological mechanism (a desire for consistency) that led people to become more than twice as likely to comply under these circumstances. But for now, let's derive a broader insight, one that is a major thesis of this book: frequently the factor most likely to determine a person's choice in a situation is not the one that counsels most wisely there; it is one that has been elevated in attention (and, thereby, in privilege) at the time of the decision.

The Importance of Attention… Is Importance

What's Salient Is Important

"Nothing in life is as important as you think it is *while* you are thinking about it. (Daniel Kahneman)

Back Roads to Attention

Managing the Background

"Fortunately for me," she continued, "the best of the students in those classes have never been satisfied with that general advice. They'd say, 'Yeah, but how?' and I never really had a good answer for them, which gave me a great question to pursue for my research project."

Fortunately for *us*, after analyzing their results, Mandel and Johnson were in a position to deliver a stunningly simple answer to the "Yeah, but how?" question. In an article largely overlooked since it was published in 2002, they described how they were able to draw website visitors' attention to the goal of comfort merely by placing *fluffy clouds* on the background wallpaper of the site's landing page. That maneuver led those visitors to assign elevated levels of importance to comfort when asked what they were looking for in a sofa. Those same visitors also became more likely to search the site for information about the comfort features of the sofas in stock and, most notably, to choose a more comfortable (and more costly) sofa as their preferred purchase.

To make sure their results were due to the landing page wallpaper and not to some general human preference for comfort, Mandel and Johnson reversed their procedure for other visitors, who saw wallpaper that pulled their attention to the goal of economy by depicting pennies instead of clouds. These visitors assigned greater levels of importance to price, searched the site primarily for cost information, and preferred an inexpensive sofa. Remarkably, despite having their importance ratings, search behavior, and buying preferences all altered pre-suasively by the landing page wallpaper, when questioned afterward, most participants refused to believe that the depicted clouds or pennies had affected them in any way.

Thus, parents whose children's schools or homes are subjected to intermittent automotive, train, or aircraft noise should insist on the implementation of sound-baffling remedies. Employers, for the sake of their workers - and their own bottom lines - should do the same. Teachers need to consider the potentially negative effects of another kind of distracting background stimuli (this one of their own making) on young students' learning and performance. Classrooms with heavily decorated walls displaying lots of posters, maps, and artwork reduce the test scores of young children learning science material there. It is clear that background information can both guide and distract focus of attention; anyone seeking to influence optimally must manage that information thoughtfully.

Inviting Favorable Evaluation

...the results all point to the same conclusion: if you agreed to participate in a consumer survey regarding some products, perhaps 35mm cameras, the survey taker could enhance your ratings of any strong brand - let's say Canon - simply by asking you to consider the qualities of Canon cameras but not asking you to consider the qualities of any of its major rivals, such as Nikon, Olympus, Pentax, or Minolta.

More than that, without realizing why, your intention to purchase a Canon 35mm camera would likely also jump, as would your desire to make the purchase straightaway, with no need to search for information about comparable brands. However, all of these advantages for Canon would drop away if you'd been asked to consider the qualities of its cameras but, *before rating those qualities*, to think about the options that Nikon, Olyhmpus, Pentax, and Minolta could provide.

Thus, to receive the benefits of focused attention, the key is to keep the focus unitary. Some impressive research demonstrates that merely engaging in a singly-chute evaluation of one of several established hotel and restaurant chains, consumer products, and even charity organizations can automatically cause people to value the focused-upon entity more and become more willing to support it financially.

Other research has extended these findings to the way that leaders and managers make strategic choices inside their organizations.

Second, for any decision maker, a painstaking comparative assessment of multiple options is difficult and stressful, akin to the juggler's task of trying to keep several objects in the air all at once. The resultant (and understandable) tendency is to avoid or abbreviate such an arduous process by selecting the first practicable candidate that presents itself. This tendency as a quirky name, "satisficing" - a term coined by economist and nNobel laureate Herbert Simon - to serve as a blend of words *satisfy* and *suffice*. The combination reflects two simultaneous goals of a chooser when facing a decision - to make it good and to make it gone - which, according to Simon, usually means making it *good enough*. Although in an ideal world one would work and wait until the optimal solution emerged, in the real world of mental overload, limited resources, and deadlines, satisficing is the norm.

To combat this potentially ruinous overoptimism, time needs to be devoted, systematically, to addressing a pair of questions that often don't arise by themselves: "What future events could make this plan go wrong?" and "What would happen to us if it did go wrong?" Decision scientists who have studied this consider-the-opposite tactic have found it both easy to implement and remarkably effective at debiasing judgments. The benefits to the organization that strives to rid itself of this and other decision-making biases can be considerable. One study of over a thousand companies determined that those employing sound judgment-debiasing processes enjoyed a 5 percent to 7 percent advantage in return on investment over those failing to use such approaches.

Chapter 4: What's Focal is Causal

Taking a Chance

One widely communicated sort of warning alerted consumers to the production lot numbers on the affected bottles - numbers that identified where and when a particular batch of capsules had been manufactured. Because they were the first to be identified, two of the numbers received the most such publicity: lots 2,880 and 1,910.

Immediately, and bewilderingly, US residents of states that ran lotteries began playing those two numbers at unprecedented rates. In three states, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, and Pennsylvania, officials announced that they had to halt wagers on the numbers because betting on them shot above "maximum liability levels."

Because of all the publicity surrounding them, they had become focal in attention; and what is focal is seen to have causal properties - to have the ability to make events occur.

It turned out that every one of the minds that thought those numbers would provide an advantage over chance was proved wrong by the subsequent lottery results. But I doubt that the losses taught those minds to avoid, in any general way, similar future errors. The tendency to presume that what is focal is causal holds sway too deeply, too automatically, and over too many types of human judgment.

Taking a Life

It was a small accident of seating arrangements: you were positioned to observe the exchange over the shoulder of the woman, making the man more visible and salient, while your friend had the reverse point of view. Taylor and her colleagues conducted a series of experiments in which observers watched and listened to conversations that had been scripted carefully so that neither discussion partner contributed more than the other. Some observers watched from a perspective that allowed them to see the face of one of the parties over the shoulder of the other, while other observers saw both faces from the side, equally. All the observers were then asked to judge who had more influence in the discussion, based on tone, content, and direction. The outcomes were always the same: whomever's face was more visible was judged to be more causal.

At the time, she was sure that parts of the dialogue had been rewritten by its Chinese director to connect with national audiences, because the questions asked of the accused in the play "were exactly the same as the questions I had been asked by the Cultural REvolutionaries." No American, she thought, could have known these precise wordings, phrasings, and sequencings.

She was shocked to hear Miller reply that he had taken the questions from the record of the 1692 Salem witchcraft trials - and that they were the same as were deployed within the House Un-American Activities Committee hearings. Later, it was the uncanny match to those in the Reilly interrogation that prompted Miller to get involved in Peter's defense.

Chapter 5: Commanders of Attention 1: The Attractors

The Sexual

What accounted for the difference? All the men had been approached a few minutes before by a different young woman who asked for street directions, but some had been asked for the whereabouts of Martin Street; the others, for Valentine Street. Those asked about the latter location made up the far braver sample of men. J According to the researchers (who had collected evidence from an earlier study), being asked about Valentine Street led the men to thoughts of a sexually linked lovers' holiday: Valentine's Day. It was the sexual connections to the word *Valentine* that triggered their bravado, propelling them to win the favor of a pretty ingenue no matter the risks.

Although the results are striking regarding the ease with which sexual stimuli provoked middle-aged male foolishness, the same results point to an instructive complication. The attractiveness of the young woman requesting assistance with her phone was not enough, by itself, to accomplish it. Something crucial to the process had to be put into place first. The men had to be exposed to a sexually linked concept, Valentine's Day, before she could prompt them to act. An *opener* was needed that rendered them receptive to her plea prior to ever encountering it. In short, an act of pre-suasion was required.

These findings cast doubt on the time-worn defense of spouses accused of developing a roving eye - "Hey, I know I'm on a diet, but there's no harm in reading the menu" - as there might well be harm ahead. In our relationships, then, we might want to be sensitive to any sustained upswing in our partner's (or our own) attentiveness to attractive alternatives, as it might well offer an early signal of a partnership in peril.

The Threatening

It's estimated that about 1,600 Americans lost their lives in additional auto accidents as a direct result [of driving vs. flying after 9/11/01], six times more than the number of passengers killed in the only US commercial plane crash that next year.

But there's a particular type of fear-stoking message that appears most capable of changing behavior.

The communicator has only to add to the chilling message clear information about legitimate, available steps the recipients can take to change their health-threatening habits. In this way, the fright can be dealt with not through self-delusional baloney that deters positive action but through genuine change opportunities that mobilize such action.

This approach, then, is how public health communicators can best deploy truthful yet frightening facts: by waiting to convey those facts until information about accessible assistance systems - programs, workshops, websites, and help lines - can be incorporated into their communication.   *Margin note: training*

And Now For Something Different: Change-O, Presto

That's an astonishing finding. One would think that adding competitors to the mix of options would reduce rather than increase the number of times the Dream would be selected, if for no other reason than the raw probabilities involved. Besides, the Titan was still among the available alternatives and still possessed all its strengths. Why would the additional sofas bring about a drastic shift in favor of the Dream? After performing multiple studies on the topic, the researchers are confident they know: adding three models with durable cushions made the Dream stand out as distinct from the other four possibilities on the feature of softness and comfort - and distinctiveness, as we've seen, swings attention to the distinguishing factor, which in this instance led to cushion comfort's greater perceived importance.

Chapter 6: Commanders of Attention 2: The Magnetizers

The Self-Relevant

Here, then, is another lesson in pre-suasion available for your use: when you have a good case to make, you can employ - as openers - simple *self*-relevant cues (such as the word *you*) to predispose your audience toward a full consideration of that strong case before they see or hear it.

That would be a mistake. Whether you offer your statement just before or after his, according to the next-in-line effect, Alex will have a hard time processing your solution, no matter how good it is.

How might you sail the waters of your meeting more expertly than your first inclination suggested? I'd propose charting a course that takes into account both the next-in-line effect and the what's-focal-is-presumed-causal effect. Take a spot at the table across from Alex where (1) he'll be sufficiently distant from his own presentation to hear yours fully, and (2), because of your visual prominence, he'll see you as fully responsible for the insights within your fine recommendation for resolving the problem. Of course, if you haven't come up with a creditably reasoned

solution to the problem, you might want to grab a chair right next to his so that in his self-focus-induced bubble, he won't likely register the fact.

The Mysterious
6. Draw the Implication for the Phenomenon Under Study

Think of it: we have something available to us here that not only keeps audience members focused generally on the issues at hand but also makes them want to pay attention to the details - the necessary but often boring and attention-deflecting particulars - of our material. What more could a communicator with a strong but intricate case want?

Part 2: Processes: The Role of Association

Chapter 7: The Primacy of Associations: I Link, Therefore I Think

In the family of ideas, there are no orphans. Each notion exists within a network of relatives linked through a shared system of associations.

Thinking Is Linking
Incidental (but Not Accidental) Exposure to Words

If SSM leaders do hold that belief, they'd be right. Multiple studies have shown that subtly exposing individuals to words that connote achievement (*win, attain, succeed, master*) increases their performance on an assigned task and more than doubles their willingness to keep working at it. Evidence like this has changed my mind about the worth of certain kinds of posters that I've occasionally seen adorning the walls of business offices.

At the start of callers' work shifts, all were given information designed to help them communicate the value of contributing to the cause for which they were soliciting (a local university). Some of the callers got the information printed on plain paper. Other callers got the identical information printed on paper carrying a photo of a runner winning a race. It was a photo that had previously been shown to stir achievement-related thinking. Remarkably, by the end of their three-hour shifts, the second sample of callers had raised 60 percent more money than their otherwise comparable coworkers. It appears, then, that initial incidental exposure either to simple words or simple images can have a pre-suasive impact on later actions that are merely associated with the words or images.

More Hot Stuff

To take advantage of this affinity, in the summer of 2013 the British division of Coca-Cola replaced its own package branding with one or another of 150 of the most common first names in the United Kingdom - doing so on 100 million packs of their product! What could justify the expense? Similar programs in Australia and New Zealand had boosted sales significantly in those regions the year before. When finally tried in the United States, it produced the first increase in Coke sales in a decade.

Chapter 8: Persuasive Geographies: All the Right Places, All the Right Right Traces

There was a type of *working space* at client headquarters that lent itself to crafting programs that had later turned out particularly well: centrally located rooms with glass walls.

Months later, she called in an upbeat mood to tell me about the "great success" of a new quality-enhancement tactic she had been trying. It emerged during a discussion with her staffers when she'd mentioned my claim that getting visual access to a client's employees while developing programs for them could improve the process. Her team's challenge then became finding a way to give themselves continues low-level exposure to those employees, even when operating in a closed-up conference room. The youngest of her staff hit on a solution that was easy to implement and has since been proven effective. Before traveling to any working meeting, the team now downloads photos of program-eligible employees from the client's website and internal publications. They then enlarge the pictures, put them on big poster boards, and lean them against the walls in whichever conference room they work. The clients reported loved the idea because they appreciate "the personalized touch" the consultants bring to the job.

Notice that because the manager and her team structure the cues of their production environments *before* they begin working in them, they are engaging in what is as much an act of pre-suasion as any we've treated in this book. The only difference is that they've chosen themselves, rather than others, as their targets.

What's Already In Us

This last example offers the best indication of what's going on, as it seems akin to the well-known occurrence of "medical student syndrome." Research shows that 70 to 80 percent of all medical students are afflicted by this

disorder, in which they experience the symptoms of whatever disease they happen to be learning about at the time and become convinced that they have contracted it.

The Positivity Paradox

After considering several possibilities, one set of investigators, led by the psychologist Laura Carstensen, hit upon a surprising answer: when it comes to dealing with all the negativity in their lives, seniors have decided that they just don't have time for it, literally.

They've come to desire a time of emotional contentment for their remaining years, and they take deliberate steps to achieve it - something they accomplish by mastering the geography of self-influence. The elderly go more frequently and fully to the locations inside and outside themselves populated by mood-lifting personal experiences. To a greater extent than younger individuals, seniors recall *positive* memories, entertain *pleasant* thoughts, seek out and retain *favorable* information, search for and gaze at *happy* faces, and focus on the *upsides* of their consumer products.

Dr. Sonja Lyubomirsky is not the first researcher to study happiness. Yet, in my view, she has made noteworthy contributions to the subject by choosing to investigate a key question more systematically than anyone else. It's not the conceptual one you might think: "What are the factors associated with happiness?" Instead, it's a procedural one: "Which specific activities can we perform to increase our happiness?"

On the one hand, she specified a set of manageable activities that reliably increase personal happiness. Several of them - including the top three on her list - require nothing more than a pre-suasive refocusing of attention:

- Count your blessings and gratitudes at the start of every day, and then give yourself concentrated time with them by writing them down.
- Cultivate optimism by choosing beforehand to look on the bright side of situations, events, and future possibilities.
- Negate the negative by deliberately limiting time spent dwelling on problems or on unhealthy comparisons with others.

There's even an iPhone app called Live Happy that helps users engage in certain of these activities, and their greater happiness correlates with frequent use.

But that's not the case for his other (pre-suasive) tactic. Alan told me that just prior to taking any standardized exam, he'd spend systematic time "getting psyched up" for it. He described a set of activities that could have come from a modified version of Dr. Lyubomirsky's list.

Instead, he spent that crucial time consciously calming his fears and simultaneously building his confidence by reviewing his past academic successes and enumerating his genuine strengths. Much of his test-taking prowess, he was convinced, stemmed from the resultant combination of diminished fear and bolstered confidence: "You can't think straight when you're scared," he reminded me, "plus, you're much more persistent when you're confident in your abilities."

I was struck that he could create an ideal state of mind for himself not just because he understood where, precisely, to focus his attention but also because as a savvy moment maker, he understood how to do it pre-suasively immediately before the test. So Alan *was* smarter than the rest of us in a meaningful way.

- Assign test takers to a room on the basis of a relevant factor (their gender), not an irrelevant one (the first letter of their last names). Why? When girls are taking a math test in the same room as boys, they are more likely to be reminded of the mathematics-and-gender stereotype. Thus, college women solving math problems in a room along with college men score worse than in a room with only other women. Notably, this drop in performance doesn't occur on tests of verbal ability, because there is no societal stereotype suggesting that women's verbal capacities are inferior to men's.
- Don't assign teachers randomly to monitor the tests. Assign them tactically, on the basis of gender and teaching specialty. Girls' monitors should be female science and mathematics teachers. Why? Evidence that other women have defied the stereotype deflates the stereotype's impact. Thus, women students solve significantly more mathematics test problems, even the most difficult ones, immediately after being exposed to instances of successful women in science- and math-related fields, including the women administering the test.

- Eliminate the ten-minute period when students collect their thoughts about how to respond to the test items likely to give them trouble, because to focus on the daunting aspects of the task will undercut their success. Instead, ask the girls to pick a personal value of importance to them (such as maintaining relationships with friends or helping others) and to write down why they find that value important. Why? This sort of "self-affirmation" procedure directs initial attention to an interpersonal strength and reduces the effects of threatening stereotypes. In one university physics class, women students who engaging in such a self-affirmation exercise just twice - one at the outset and once in the middle of the semester - scored better on the course's math-intensive examinations by a full letter grade.
- Do not instruct students to record their gender at the start of the math exam, as that will likely remind female test takers of the mathematics-and-gender stereotype. In its place, ask students to record their year in school, which in your sample would always be "graduating senior." Why? In keeping with the power of mere attention shifts, that change will supplant a pre-suasive focus on a perceived academic shortcoming with a pre-suasive focus on a perceived academic accomplishment. When such a procedure has been tried, it has eliminated women test takers' math performance deficits.

Of all the demonstrations of how steering attention from one feature of a person's inner geography to another can affect performance, I have a clear favorite: besides the belief that women don't do well in math, there is the belief that Asians do. Prior to a mathematics test, researchers asked some Asian American women students to record their gender; others were asked to record their ethnicity. Compared with a sample of Asian American women students who weren't asked to record either characteristic, those who were reminded of their gender scored worse, while those reminded of their ethnicity scored better.

Chapter 9: The Mechanics of Pre-Suasion: Causes, Constraints, and Correctives

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.

Readied and Waiting

A tellingly similar but mirror-image effect occurs after participating in *prosocial* video games - those that call for protecting, rescuing, or assisting characters in the game. Studies have found that after playing such games, players became more willing to help clean up a spill, volunteer their time, and even intervene in a harassment situation involving a young woman and her ex-boyfriend. Moreover, this helpfulness is the direct result of participants' easy access to a range of prosocial thoughts that the games install in consciousness. In an interesting twist, newer research shows that sometimes violent video game play can decrease later aggressive behavior, provided that the participants have to cooperate with one another in the game to destroy an enemy. Additional details of the new research fit the accessibility account: playing a game cooperatively, even one with violent content, suppresses aggressive thoughts.

There is little need to belabor the advertising industry's use of this approach. Almost everybody is aware of what its practitioners are attempting. But besides the fact that the device works nonetheless, the take-away here is that an effective linkage between concepts doesn't have to be located in prevailing reality. It can be *constructed*. The concepts only have to be experienced as linked directly in some way for the subsequent presentation of one to prepare the other for pertinent action.

The evidence is overwhelming that, like Pavlov's dogs, we can be susceptible to such strategically fashioned parings and just as clueless about our susceptibility. For instance, to the delight of advertisers, simply super-imposing a brand of Belgian beer five times on pictures of pleasant activities such as sailing, waterskiing, and cuddling increased viewers' positive feelings toward the beer. Similarly, superimposing a brand of mouthwash on pictures of beautiful nature scenes six times led observers to feel more favorable toward the brand right away and *still* more favorable three weeks afterward. Subliminally exposing thirty people eight times to pictures of happy (versus angry) faces just before having them taste a new soft drink caused them to consume more of the beverage and to be willing to be three times more for it in the store. In none of these studies were the participants aware that they'd been influenced by the pairings.

If/When-Then Plans

Within health, for instance, we translate our good intentions into *any* type of active step only about half the time. The disappointing success rates have been traced to a pair of failings. First, besides sometimes forgetting about

an intention - let's say, to exercise more - we frequently don't recognize opportune moments or circumstances for healthy behaviors, such as taking the stairs rather than the elevator. Second, we are often derailed from goal strivings by factors - such as especially busy days - that distract us from our purpose.

Fortunately, there is a category of strategic self-statements that can overcome these problems pre-suasively. The statements have various names in scholarly usage, but I'm going to call them *if/when-then plans*. They are designed to help us achieve a goal by readying us (1) to register certain cues in settings where we can further our goal, and (2) to take an appropriate action spurred by the cues and consistent with the goal. Let's say that we aim to lose weight. An if/when-then plan might be "*If/when*, after my business lunches, the server asks if I'd like to have dessert, *then* I will order mint tea." Other goals can also be effectively achieved by using these plans. When epilepsy sufferers who were having trouble staying on the medication schedules were asked to formulate an if/when-then plan - for example, "*When* it is eight in the morning, and I finish brushing my teeth, *then* I will take my prescribed pill dose" - adherence rose from 55 percent to 79 percent.

The "if/when-then" wording is designed to put us on high alert for a particular time or circumstance when a productive action could be performed. We become prepared, first, to *notice* the favorable time or circumstance and, second, to *associate* it automatically and directly with desired conduct. Noteworthy is the self-tailored nature of this pre-suasive process. We get to install in ourselves heightened vigilance for certain cues that we have targeted previously, and we get to employ a strong association that we have constructed previously between those cues and a beneficial step toward our goal.

Chronically unsuccessful dieters eat fewer high-calorie foods and lose more weight after forming if/when-then plans such as "*If/when* I see chocolate displayed in the supermarket, *then* I will think of my diet." Especially for goals we are highly committed to reaching, we'd be foolish not to take advantage of the pre-suasive leverage that if/when-then plans can provide.

Correction: Minding the Gap

To this point, we've covered a lot of data showing that (1) what is more accessible in mind becomes more probably in action, and (2) this accessibility is influenced by the informational cues around us and by our raw associations to them.

Signs of Stealthy Persuasive Intent: A Nudge Too Far

Take, for instance, the results of a study that examined the prominence of product placements in episodes of the popular TV sitcom *Seinfeld*. Just as expected, the most noticeable placements (in which the brand was both shown on camera and mentioned aloud) produced the most recognition and recall compared with less obvious placements (in which the brand name was either only heard or only seen).

But besides assessing recognition and recall, the study's authors did something that prior researchers had not done: they obtained a third measure of placement success that undercut conventional wisdom. From a list of brands, audience members indicated which ones they would be likely to choose when shopping. Guess what? It turned out that the survey respondents were *least* likely to select the products that had been inserted most prominently. It seems that the conspicuousness of the placements cued viewers to the advertisers' sly attempts to sway their preferences and caused a correction against the potential distortion. Whereas the most subtly placed brands were chosen by 47 percent of the audience, only 27 percent picked the most prominently placed ones.

If we go to the supermarket with the idea of purchasing healthy, nutritious, and inexpensive foods, we can neutralize the draw of heavily advertised, attractively packaged, or easy-to-reach items on the shelves by weighing our choices on the basis of caloric, nutritional, and unit-pricing information on the labels.

Gapping the Mind

I once attended a conference of infomercial producers. I'd assumed that the sole reason they commonly place ads in late-hour slots was the lower broadcast fees charged at thoise times. I quickly learned differently. Although that started out as the main reason most such programming begins far into the night, there is a more important reason: the ads perform better then. At the tail of a long day, viewers don't have the mental energy to resist the ads' emotional triggers (likable hosts, enthusiastic studio audiences, dwindling supplies, and so on).

Part 3: Best Practices: The Optimization of Pre-Suasion

Chapter 10: Six Main Roads to Change: Broad Boulevards as Smart Shortcuts

If we want them to buy a box of expensive chocolates, we can first arrange for them to write down a number

that's much larger than the price of the chocolates.

If we want them to agree to try an untested product, we can first inquire whether they consider themselves adventurous.

The Roads Oft Taken
Reciprocation

As a result, children respond to the rule before they are two years old. By the time they are adults, its persuasive power influences all aspects of their lives, including their buying patterns. In one study, shoppers at a candy store became 42 percent more likely to make a purchase if they'd received a gift piece of chocolate upon entry. According to sales figures from the retail giant Costco, other types of products - beer, cheese, frozen pizza, lipstick - get big lifts from free samples, almost all accounted for by the shoppers who accept the free offer.

There are three main features of this sort: in order to optimize the return, what we give first should be experienced as meaningful, unexpected, and customized.

Liking

We were instructed to highlight similarities and provide compliments. There's good reason why these two practices would be emphasized: each increases liking and assent.

The Real Number One Rule for Salespeople

Although this kind of pre-suasive process no doubt operates to some degree, I am convinced that a more influential pre-suasive mechanism is at work. Similarities and compliments cause people to feel that you like *them*, and once they come to recognize that you like them, they'll want to do business with you. That's because people trust that those who like them will try to steer them correctly. So by my lights, the number one rule for salespeople is to show customers that you genuinely like them. There's a wise adage that fits this logic well: people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.

Social Proof

Many governments expend significant resources regulating, monitoring, and sanctioning companies that pollute our air and water; these expenditures often appear wasted on some of the offenders, who either flout the regulations altogether or are willing to pay fines that are smaller than the costs of compliance. But certain nations have developed cost-effective programs that work by firing up the (nonpolluting) engine of social proof. They initially rate the environmental performance of polluting first within an industry and then publicize the ratings, so that all companies in that industry can see where they stand relative to their peers. The overall improvements have been dramatic - upward of 30 percent - almost all of which have come from changes made by the relatively heavy polluters, who recognized how poorly they'd been doing compared with their contemporaries.

Margin note: learning #'s

Trustworthiness

It turns out to be possible to acquire instant trustworthiness by employing a clever strategy . Rather than succumbing to the tendency to describe all of the most favorable features of an offer or idea up front and reserving mention of any drawbacks until the end of the presentation (or never), a communicator who references a weakness early on is immediately seen as more honest.

Another enhancement occurs when the speaker uses a transitional word - such as *however*, or *but*, or *yet* - that channels the listeners' attention away from the weakness and onto a countervailing strength. A job candidate might say, "I am not experienced in this field, *but* I am a very fast learner." An information systems salesperson might state, "Our set-up costs are not the lowest; *however*, you'll recoup them quickly due to our superior efficiencies.

Scarcity

Although there are several reasons that scarcity drives desire, our aversion to losing something of value is a key factor. After all, loss is the ultimate form of scarcity, rendering the valued item or opportunity unavailable.

But the scarcity of an item does more than raise the possibility of loss; it also raises the judged value of that item. When automobile manufacturers limit production of a new model, its value goes up among potential buyers. Other restrictions in other settings generate similar results. At one large grocery chain, brand promotions that

included a purchase limit ("Only *x* per customer") more than doubled sales for seven different types of products compared with promotions for the same products that didn't include a purchase limit. Follow-up studies showed why. In the consumer's mind, any constraint on access increased the worth of what was being offered.

Consistency
Organizations can raise the probability that an individual will appear at a meeting or event by switching from saying at the end of a reminder phone call, "We'll mark you on the list as coming then. Thank you!" to "We'll mark you on the list as coming then, okay? [*Pause for confirmation.*] Thank you." One blood services organization that made this tiny, commitment-inducing wording change increased the participation of likely donors in a blood drive from 70 percent to 82.4 percent.

What Else Can Be Said About the Universal Principles of Influence?
At the first stage, the main goal involves *cultivating a positive association*, as people are more favorable to a communication if they are favorable to the communicator. Two principles of influence, reciprocity and liking, seem particularly appropriate to the task. Giving first (in a meaningful, unexpected and customized fashion), highlighting genuine commonalities, and offering true compliments establish mutual rapport that facilitates all future dealings.

At the second stage, *reducing uncertainty* becomes a priority. A positive relationship with a communicator doesn't ensure persuasive success. Before people are likely to change, they want to see any decision as wise. Under these circumstances, the principles of social proof and authority offer the best match. Pointing to evidence that a choice is well regarded by peers or experts significantly increases confidence in its wisdom. But even with a positive association cultivated and uncertainty reduced, a remaining step needs to be taken.

At this third stage, *motivating action* is the main objective. That is, a well-liked friend might show me sufficient proof that experts recommend (and almost all my peers believe) that daily exercise is a good thing, but that might not be enough to get me to do it. The friend would do well to include in his appeal the principles of consistency and scarcity by reminding me of what I've said publicly in the past about the importance of my health and the unique enjoyments I would miss if I lost it. That's the message that would most likely get me up in the morning and off to the gym.

Unity 1: Being Together
- separate from the other six principles of influence. Relationships not only intensify willingness to help but also cause it.

Being Together
Kinship
From an evolutionary perspective, any advantages to one's kin should be promoted, including relatively small ones.

ZThen he did something I'd never seen or heard him do in any public forum. He added, "With that warning, I will tell you what I would say to my family today if they asked me about Berkshire's future."

What followed was careful construction of the case for Berkshire Hathaway's foreseeable economic health: the proven business model, the bulwark of financial assets, the scrupulously vetted future CEO. As convincing as these components of his argument were on their merits, Mr. Buffett had pre-suasively done something that made me judge them as even more convincing: he had claimed that he was going to advise me about them as he would a family member.

Place
His experience suggests a piece of advice for prospective parents who want their children to develop a broadly charitable nature: give them contact *in the home* with individuals from a wide spectrum of backgrounds and treat those individuals there like family.

Region
...the most impressive persuasive communication I have encountered in over thirty years of studying the process: "Because," he said calmly, "we are Asian, *like you*."

Although brief, the assertion was inspired. It shifted the Japanese officers' reigning in-group identity from one based in a temporary wartime alliance to one based in a regional, genetically related mutuality. It did so by

implicating the Nazis' own racial claim that the "superior" Aryan master race was innately different from the peoples of Asia. Within a single, penetrating observation, it was the Jews who were aligned with the Japanese and the Nazis who (self-proclaimedly) were not. The older rabbi's response had a powerful effects on the Japanese officers. After a silence, they conferred among themselves and announced a recess. When they returned, the most senior military official rose and granted the reassurance the rabbis had hoped to bring home to their community: "Go back to your people. Tell them we will provide for their safety and peace. You have nothing to fear while in Japanese territory." And so it was.

Chapter 12: Unity 2: Acting Together

The behavioral science record is equally clear as to why. When people act in unitary ways, they become *unitized*. The resultant feeling of group solidarity serves societies' interests well, producing degrees of loyalty and self-sacrifice associated usually with much smaller family units. Thus, human societies, even ancient ones, seem to have discovered group bonding "technologies" involving coordinated responding. The effects are similar to those of kinship: feelings of we-ness, merger, and the confusion of self and other.

<div align="center">*Margin note: AS*</div>

Support

    Isn't there some *generally* applicable mechanism that social entities could deploy to bring about such synchrony to influence members toward group goals? There is. It's music. And fortunately for individual communicators, it also can be co-opted to move others toward the goals of a single agent of influence.

Music in the Struggle for Influence: It's a Jingle Out There

In this last respect, consider the results of a study in Germany of four-year-old children. As part4 of a game, some of the kids walked around a circle with a partner while singing and keeping time in their movements with recorded music. Other kids did nearly the same but without the accompaniment of music. Later, when the children had an opportunity to show helpfulness, those who had sung and walked together in time with music were over three times more likely to help their partner than were those who did not have a pre-suasive joint musical experience.

Systems Engineering

Thus, if you are considering a car purchase primarily from the standpoint of its emotionally relevant features (attractive looks and exhilarating acceleration), a salesperson would be well advised to convince you by using feelings-related arguments. Research suggests that even merely saying "I *feel* this is the one for you" will be more successful. But if you are considering the purchase primarily on rational grounds (fuel economy and trade-in value), "I *think* this is the one for you" would be more likely to close the sale."

For anyone interested in maximizing persuasive success, the critical takeaway from this section should not be merely that music is allied with System 1 responding or that people act imprudently when channeled to that kind of responding. The far larger lesson involves the importance of matching the System 1 versus 2 character of persuasive communication with the System 1 versus 2 mind-set of its intended audience. Recipients with nonrational, hedonistic goals should be matched with messages containing nonrational elements such as musical accompaniment, whereas those with rational, pragmatic goals should be matched with messages containing rational elements such as facts.

In his outstanding book *Persuasive Advertising: Evidence-Based Principles*, marketing expert J. Scott Armstrong reported that in a 2008 analysis of thirty-second TV commercials, 87 percent incorporated music. But this routine addition of music to the message might well be flawed, as Armstrong also reviewed the relevant research and concluded that music should be used only to advertise familiar, feelings-based products (snack foods, body scents) in an emotional contest - that is, where thinking is unlikely. For products that have high personal consequences and strong supportive arguments (safety equipment, software packages) - that is, for which hard thinking is likely and instructive - background music undercuts ad effectiveness.

Continuing Reciprocal Exchange

As reflected in the essay's title, "To Fall in Love with Anyone, Do This," it's author, Mandy Len Catron,

Thus, when responding, participants increasingly open themselves up to one another in a trusting way representative of tightly bonded pairs. Second, and in keeping with the overarching theme of this chapter, participants do so by *acting* together - that is, in a coordinated, back-and-forth fashion, making the interaction

inherently and continuously synchronous.

Co-Creation

A portion of that confidence comes from the results of a study I helped conduct to investigate the effects of managers' degree of personal involvement in the creation of a work product. I'd expect that the more involvement managers felt they'd had in generating the final product in concert with an employee, the higher they would rate its quality, which is what we found: managers l ed to believe that they'd had a large role in developing the end product (an ad for a new wristwatch) rates the ad 50 percent more favorably than did managers led to believe they'd had little developmental involvement - even though the final ad they saw was identical in all cases. In addition, we found that the managers with the greatest perceived involvement rated themselves more responsible for the ad's quality in terms of their much greater perceived managerial control over their employee, which I'd also expected.

But I didn't expect a third finding at all. The more the managers attributed the success of the project to themselves, the more they also attributed it to the ability of their employee.

I just didn't get it at the time, but now I think I do. If co-creation causes at least a temporary merging of identities, then what applies to one partner also applies to the other, distributional logic not-withstanding.

Asking for Advice is Good Advice

That's what happened to a group of online survey takers from around the United States shown a description of the business plan for a new fast-casual restaurant, Splash!, that hoped to distinguish itself from competitors through the healthfulness of its menu items. After reading the description, all the survey participants were asked for feedback. But some were asked for any "advice" they might have regarding the restaurant, whereas others were asked for any "opinions" or "expectations" they might have. Finally, they indicated how likely they'd be to patronize a Splash! Restaurant. Those participants who provided advice reported wanting to eat ast a Splash! Significantly more than participants who provided either of the other sorts of feedback. And just as we would expect if giving advice is indeed a mechanism of unitization, the increased desire to support the restaurant came from feeling more linked with the brand.

This set of results also clinches for me the wisdom (and the ethicality, if done in an authentic search for useful information) of asking for advice in face-to-face interactions with friends, colleagues, and customers. It should even prove effective in our interactions with superiors. Of course, it is reasonable and rational to worry about a potential downside - that by asking a boss for advice, you might come off as incompetent or dependent or insecure. While I see the logic of such a concern, I also see it as mistaken because, as the study of supervisors' estimation of collaborators' contributions indicated, the effects of co-creation are not well captured by reason, rationality, or logic. But they are exceedingly well captured by a particular socially promotive *feeling* in the situation: the (highly beneficial for you state of togetherness. The novelist Saul Bellow once observed, "When we ask for advice, we are usually looking for an accomplice." I'd only add on the basis of scientific evidence that, if we get that advice, we usually get the accomplice. And what better abettor to have on a project than someone in charge?

Chapter 13: Ethical Use: A Pre-Pre-Suausive Consideration

The Triple Tumor Structure of Organizational Dishonesty

Poor Employee Performance

We took the business situation and its related questions from a well-validated test of business intelligence to ensure that performance on it would involve the kinds of judgments that affect business success. The ensuing data showed dramatic differences. Those participants whose work team had previously been deceptive scored 20 percent lower on the test than our other participants. Another finding gave us an indication of why the first group performed so poorly: after working on the business problem for a while, the members just stopped - significantly sooner than the other participants - suggesting that they didn't have the same energy or motivation to continue.

According to their reports, first, the more unethical the climate, the poorer the worker's job performance; second, the more unethical the climate, the more stress they felt at work; and third, that particular stress caused their poor performance. With this evidence in hand, when making an economically centered pitch to business leaders against unethical activities, we thought we had the makings of "Strike one."

Chapter 14: Post-Suasion: Aftereffects

Create Lasting Change by Installing Strong Commitments

Traditionally, behavioral scientists have offered a straightforward answer to the question of how to make a person's initially affirmative response persist: arrange for the individual to make a commitment to that response, usually in the form of an active step.

After people read a happy story, their temporarily elevating mood caused them to like a painting. But five days later, only those who had actively rated in while in that elated state still felt the same way about the painting.

The implication for effective pre-suasion is plain: pre-suasive openers can produce dramatic, immediate shifts in people, but to turn those shifts into durable changes, it's necessary to get commitments to them, usually in the form of related behavior.

Creating Lasting Change by Cueing Up the Cues

Why would the program organizers spend good money on such a bewildering journey? By then, I knew: the program information was never envisioned for Tucson. It had always been designed for the *bus*. I was sure this was true because, halfway to Tucson, I'd looked out my window and observed another aging, distinctively colored yellow-and-blue bus carrying a load of riders from Tucson to Phoenix. That sight supplied an immediate, clarifying epiphany: from the start, the organizers had intended to expose us to the details of their wealth program (a pyramid scheme, as I'd suspected) on buses rattling along the road between the two cities> I believe that was the case for a pair of psychologically based reasons. First, *it was hard to think hard* in that rolling, noise, bumpy, crowded, emotionally agitating environment, and hard thinking is the chief foe of pyramid sales systems.

Second, when people can't deliberate carefully, can't concentrate fully, they are much more likely to respond automatically to whatever decision-making cues are present in the situation. On our bus, the program organizers controlled those cues. They'd been able to fill the space with an array of features that, wherever we looked, set us up to be receptive to their message. Achievement-related posters adorned the walls and ceiling, wealth-linked slogans were taped to our seatbacks, and success-themed music preceded each new speaker's presentation. (Songs from the *Rocky* movies predominated; "Eye of the Tiger" was a favorite.) The speakers' basic message was always some version of "You can do it, you can do it, you can do it, you can do it - provided you use the system." This universal assertion was accompanied by a collection of supportive cues: an expensive, beautifully tailored suit worn by one speaker, an $11,000 commission check "from this month alone" waved by another, a glowing testimonial letter read by a third from an individual who before starting the program had "been just like you folks." By the time we'd returned to Phoenix, two-thirds of us had signed on.

Modern life is becoming more and more like that bus hurtling down the highway: speedy, turbulent, stimulus saturated, and mobile. As a result, we are all becoming less and less able to think hard and well about what best to do in many situations. Hence, even the most careful-minded of us are increasingly likely to react automatically to the cues for action that exist in those settings.

Previous chapters offered some examples of how we might go about it: if you want to write in a way that connects with a particular audience, perhaps as you are preparing a report or presentation, surround yourself with cues linked to that group: for instance, typical audience members' faces. If you want to approach a task while possessing a strong achievement orientation, perhaps at work, give yourself contact with images of success, striving, and accomplishment, such as a runner winning a race. If you want to approach a different task while possessing an analytical orientation, perhaps when figuring a budget, give yourself access to images of contemplation, thoughtfulness, and examination: for example, Rodin's *The Thinker*. And so on. You might even be able to optimize the performance of each of these types of tasks in the same place on the same computer by changing the desktop wallpaper to show a series of images appropriate to whichever orientation you want to apply to a specific task.

If/when-then plans provide yet another way to harness the power of associative connections for our long-term advantage. It's something they do by associating desirable goals and actions with cues. That we will experience in regularly occurring future situations: "*If*, after my business lunches, the server asks for dessert choices, *then* I will order mint tea," or "*When* it's eight in the morning, and I've finished brushing my teeth, *then* I'll take my prescribed dose of medicine." Although each of these suggested tactics is consistent with research presented earlier in this book, there's another worthy tactic that gets its support from research we haven't yet seen on the role of mere reminders.

Persuasive Geographies 2: Who We Are is Where We Are

The sign that reminded the doctors to protect themselves had no effect on soap and gel use. But the one reminding them to protect their patients increased usage by 45 percent.

It's also a conclusion that provides a fitting close to this book: In large measure, *who* we are with respect to any

choice is *where* we are, attentionally, in the moment before the choice. We can be channeled to that privileged moment by (choice-relevant) cues we haphazardly bump into in our daily settings; or, of greater concern, by the cues a knowing communicator has tactically placed there; or, to much better and lasting effect, by the cues we have stored in those recurring sites to send us consistently in desired directions. In each case, the made moment is pre-suasive. Whether we are wary of the underlying process, attracted to its potential, or both, we'd be right to acknowledge its considerable power and wise to understand its inner workings.