



Robert Cialdini

Robert B. Cialdini was the Regents' Professor of Psychology and W.P. Carey Distinguished Professor of Marketing at Arizona State University where he has also been named Distinguished Graduate Research Professor. He retired from academia in May of 2009.

His book *Influence* is the result of years of study into the reasons that people comply with requests in business and other settings and has sold over 2 million copies and have been translated into twenty-six languages.

Six "Weapons of Influence"

Cialdini defines six "weapons of influence":

Reciprocity - People tend to return a favour. Thus, the pervasiveness of free samples in marketing. In his conferences, he often uses the example of Ethiopia providing thousands of dollars in humanitarian aid to Mexico just after the 1985 earthquake, despite Ethiopia suffering from a crippling famine and civil war at the time. Ethiopia had been reciprocating for the diplomatic support Mexico provided when Italy invaded Ethiopia in 1937.

Commitment and Consistency - If people commit, orally or in writing, to an idea or goal, they are more likely to honour that commitment. Even if the original incentive or motivation is removed after they have already agreed, they will continue to honour the agreement. For example, in car sales, suddenly raising the price at the last moment works because the buyer has already decided to buy.

Social Proof - People will do things that they see other people are doing. For example, in one experiment, one or more confederates would look up into the sky; bystanders would then look up into the sky to see what they were seeing. At one point this experiment aborted, as so many people were looking up that they stopped traffic.

Authority - People will tend to obey authority figures, even if they are asked to perform objectionable acts...

Liking - People are easily persuaded by other people that they like. Cialdini cites the marketing of Tupperware in what might now be called viral marketing. People were more likely to buy if they liked the person selling it to them. Some of the many biases favouring more attractive people are discussed.

Scarcity - Perceived scarcity will generate demand. For example, saying offers are available for a "limited time only" encourages sales.

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