



PERSUASIVE SPEAKING

Advanced Communication Series



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Successful salespeople focus on the buyer, possess good listening skills, create value for the buyer, radiate credibility, and maintain a good attitude. By understanding the thought processes people employ when making a purchase, you can structure your words and actions to match this process. Ask questions to discover the buyer's problem or need, then show how your product or service solves that problem or need.

OBJECTIVES:

- ▶ Learn a technique for selling an inexpensive product in a retail store.
- ▶ Recognize a buyer's thought processes in making a purchase.
- ▶ Elicit information from a prospective buyer through questions.
- ▶ Match the buyer's situation with the most appropriate product.

Time: Eight to 12 minutes

THE EFFECTIVE SALESPERSON

Persuasion is the process used to influence the thoughts and actions of others. Nowhere is the persuasive process more evident than in the sales profession. Every day salespeople persuade people to buy their products or services. If you are not a salesperson, you, as a consumer, are a participant in the sales process when you interact with door-to-door salespeople, telephone solicitors, and clerks in stores. It is likely that, at least once, you have been persuaded by an exceptionally good salesperson and bought his or her product – even if you really didn't need or want it!

In this project, you will be introduced to the persuasive process used in sales and practice the skills involved in selling an inexpensive product in a store. Selling a low-cost product differs from selling an expensive product or service because it involves little risk or monetary investment for the buyer. (You'll learn more about this difference in Project 2.) You'll learn basic persuasive principles that can be applied in any situation in which you are trying to convince someone to accept your ideas. You'll also apply these principles in the other projects in this manual.

QUALITIES OF SUCCESSFUL SALESPEOPLE

Most sales managers and trainers in retail stores around the world agree that several qualities separate successful salespeople from those who merely survive.

- ▶ Focus on the buyer. Successful salespeople focus on the buyer and the buyer's needs. Perhaps you have encountered a salesperson who was so intent on impressing you with his product that he ignored your comments and questions. Or you may have met a salesperson whose opening statement was that if you buy from her now, the company will give her a trip to Hawaii as a reward. Such salespeople are focused on themselves, not on the buyer.
- ▶ Possess good listening skills. Successful salespeople are good listeners. Not only do they provide information about their product or service, they listen to their customers, encouraging customers to provide information about their needs, goals, and problems.
- ▶ Create value for the buyer. Successful salespeople want to help the customer meet their needs and goals in the most efficient and effective manner possible. They are honest about their product and how it will – or will not – meet the customer's needs and goals.
- ▶ Radiate credibility. Buyers prefer working with salespeople they respect and in whom they have confidence. Your credibility is demonstrated in your knowledge of your own product, competitors' products, and the industry as a whole. Your communication skills also affect credibility; being able to express yourself clearly

and concisely influences buyers in a positive way. Reliability also plays a role in credibility. Good salespeople follow through on promises.

- ▶ Maintain a good attitude. Successful salespeople are friendly, courteous, and patient.

THE BUYER'S NEEDS

As mentioned, successful salespeople focus on the buyer. This means they structure their words and actions to more readily influence the buyer. They understand the thought process people employ when making any purchase, whether large or small, and they structure their words and actions to match this process.

In his book, *The Anatomy of Persuasion*, Norbert Aubuchon describes a five-step thought process used by buyers. You probably follow this thought process, too, when making a purchase:

1. **Need Identification.** The buying process begins when the buyer has an unsatisfied need.
2. **Recognition of Importance.** The buyer realizes the need is so important that he or she must act on it.
3. **Search for Fulfillment.** The buyer looks for ways to fill this recognized need. For example, if you are bored, you may go to a book store and spend a few minutes searching for something to read. If you need a new car, you may spend several weeks looking at different models and test-driving them.
4. **Evaluation of Options.** Once you've examined the options available, you study the information collected and match your needs against each option.
5. **Decision-making.** After considering the information and options, you make a decision. You may decide to purchase something, or you may even decide not to buy anything at this time. For example, after examining books in the mystery, travel, and history sections of the bookstore, you decide on a particular travel book. Perhaps after looking at cars for several weeks, you decide a new one is out of your price range right now.

By recognizing this process and incorporating it into your communications, you will have a stronger chance of persuading someone to buy your product.

YOUR SALES STRATEGY

The first step in any sales situation is to build rapport with the buyer. People enjoy doing business with people they like, so you want to help the buyer like you. Engage in small talk before conducting business. Small talk helps the buyer get to know you personally. Talk about the weather, current events, the traffic you encountered on the way, and other topics of general interest. Such non-threatening exchanges should put you both at ease and make you comfortable enough to conduct business.

The next step – and the foundation of any sales effort – is to find out about the buyer and his or her needs and goals. Instead of launching into a pitch for your product(s) as many salespeople do, work to discover as much information about the buyer as you can by asking questions and listening to the buyer's responses. Your goal is to get enough data from the buyer to enable you to present a product appropriate to his or her needs and circumstances.

Your communication skills affect credibility; being able to express yourself clearly and concisely influences buyers in a positive way.

The best way to get the information you're looking for is to ask questions. Of course, you don't want to bombard a buyer with dozens of annoying questions. But asking a few choice questions most likely will result in the information you seek. Such questions include:

What do you do?

How do you do it?

When and where do you do it?

Why do you do it that way?

Who are you doing it with?

What problems are you having with it?

What would you like it to do better?

The buyer's answers to the first four questions help you establish the buyer's present situation. The last two questions help you determine what problems the buyer may be experiencing and what improvements he or she would like to see.

Of course, these questions don't fit all situations and variations may be substituted. For example, suppose you work in an appliance store, and a prospective buyer is examining toasters. The first question you ask could be, "Are you looking for a toaster for your home or business?" (a version of the first question on the list, "What do you do?"). Subsequent questions would be "What kind of toaster do you have now?" (How do you do it? Who do you do it with?) "How old is it?" "How many slices does it toast? How big is it?" (When and where do you do it?) "Do you only toast bread?" (Why do you do it that way?) "Are you satisfied with the toaster?" "How well has the toaster been working?" (What problems are you having?) "What other feature would you like a new toaster to have?" (What would you like it to do better?)

Take care not to ask questions that require only one-word responses like yes or no. The best questions to ask are those that begin with what, how and why since they require longer responses.

Remember, too, the questions above are not the only ones to ask. Listen carefully to the buyer's answers and ask follow-up questions based on those answers. These follow-up questions may give you even more information about your buyer and his or her needs.

SOLVING THE BUYER'S PROBLEM

Once you've discovered the buyer's situation, you can introduce possible solutions.

The solution is the product or service you're presenting. It must be able to satisfy the needs the buyer has expressed and be appropriate and desirable. In some cases, more than one product will satisfy the buyer's needs. In these cases, point out all of the available solutions to the buyer. Occasionally you may realize not one of your products is appropriate for the buyer. If so, admit it. It is better to lose a sale than to convince a buyer to purchase a product you know isn't suitable. Although you may lose the sale, you will maintain the buyer's trust and respect.

As you discuss the solution with the buyer, be sure to point out the solution's features. A feature is a fact about the product that makes it distinctive or special. For example, in the above scenario, the fact that a toaster accommodates four slices is a feature. That each two slots on the four-slice toaster has its own settings is another. Other features may include that the slots are wide and two of the slots are extra wide.

While features are important, they are not the reasons someone will purchase the product. People buy something because of the benefits the product offers. Benefits are what the product will do for them. The benefits should tie in directly with the problems expressed by the buyer. In

the four-slice toaster example, the wide slots accommodate bagels and other pastries, which, as you discovered through your questioning, the buyer likes to have for breakfast. The wide slots are a benefit.

OBTAINING COMMITMENT

After you've discovered the buyer's needs and problems, shown the solutions (products) that meet these needs and pointed out the features and benefits of the solution, ask for the buyer's commitment. You'll know you have reached the point where the buyer is ready to commit to the purchase by the following signals:

- ▶ A smile or nod from the buyer
- ▶ Affirmative statements from the buyer, such as "This sounds great."
- ▶ Questions from the buyer about prices, availability, and service.

Once you've received these signals, the time is right for obtaining a commitment. Some salespeople are hesitant to take this step for fear of rejection or that they will appear aggressive or pushy. But if you don't ask for a commitment, you may not get it.

Begin to finalize the sale by asking the buyer if he or she has any concerns and responding to them. If necessary, briefly review the product's features and benefits. Then ask confidently, and with a smile, if the buyer would like to purchase the product. When the buyer says yes, reaffirm that the buyer has made a good choice and proceed with the sale.

YOUR ASSIGNMENT

This project consists of five parts. First, before the club meeting, select a partner and together choose a scenario to role play for three to five minutes. You will play the part of a salesperson, selling a low-cost product of your choice in a store following the process described. Your partner will play the role of a prospective buyer. Perhaps you are selling coffee makers, tools or toys. Do not rehearse. Be sure to read about role plays in the appendix, and make sure your partner does, too.

Next, for your presentation, you will present a three- to four-minute speech about the persuasive process used in sales. This will help your audience to better understand the presentation's objectives and to evaluate the presentation. Then, briefly introduce the scenario you have chosen to role play and your partner. Finally, enact the three- to five-minute scene with your partner.

You will conclude with a short (two to three minutes), informal discussion with your partner and your audience about the persuasive process that took place. You may want to ask what you could say or do differently to be more effective and other similar questions.

People buy something because of a product's benefits. Benefits are what the product will do for the buyer and should tie in directly with the buyer's problems.

EVALUATION GUIDE FOR **THE EFFECTIVE SALESPERSON**

Title _____

Evaluator _____ Date _____

Note to the Evaluator: The purpose of this presentation is for the speaker to enact a role play with another member. The speaker plays the role of a salesperson in a store, and the other member acts the part of a prospective buyer. The product being sold is determined by the speaker. The speaker is to first give a brief introduction explaining the persuasive process used in sales to help the audience better understand the presentation's objectives and to evaluate the presentation. The speaker is to introduce the role play and the partner, then conduct the role play. Finally, the speaker is to lead a brief discussion with the partner and the audience about the role play. It is suggested you read the entire project before the presentation. In addition to your verbal evaluation, please give written responses to the questions below.

- ▶ How well did the speaker explain the persuasive process used in retail sales of inexpensive items?

- ▶ Was the speaker able to build rapport with the buyer?

- ▶ How effective were the questions the speaker asked? How did the speaker use follow-up questions to elicit more information?

- ▶ What did the speaker do to show attentiveness to and concern for the buyer?

- ▶ How knowledgeable did the speaker appear to be about the product(s) he or she was selling?

- ▶ Was the speaker friendly, courteous, and polite?

- ▶ How effective were the speaker's efforts to obtain commitment from the buyer?

- ▶ What could the speaker have said to be more effective?

- ▶ What did the speaker do especially well in the sales process?

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Selling expensive products can be challenging because prospective buyers are more hesitant and the process may take weeks or months. By positioning yourself as a resource for your buyers, striving to make buyers' jobs easier and their product better, you'll be more likely to make a sale. The buyers will consider you to be on their team and will be more loyal to you and your product.

OBJECTIVES:

- ▶ Learn a technique for cold call selling of expensive products or services.
- ▶ Recognize the risks buyers assume in purchasing.
- ▶ Use questions to help the buyer discover problems with his or her current situation.
- ▶ Successfully handle buyer's objections and concerns.

Time: 10 to 14 minutes

CONQUERING THE COLD CALL

In Project 1 you learned a persuasion process that works well when selling an inexpensive product. However, selling expensive or complex items or services such as computer systems, software, business equipment or machinery, and even homes and automobiles requires a different approach. In this project, you will have an opportunity to practice the persuasive skills involved in cold call selling of an expensive product or service and how to successfully handle objections.

RISKY BUSINESS

The more money involved in a sale, the more hesitant and cautious a prospective buyer will be. Not only are people exceptionally cautious about parting with large amounts of cash, they often are wary about the personal risk they are assuming as well. Business people who make a purchasing mistake may suffer more consequences than just a bad product or service. Their risks include losing respect from superiors and co-workers, a demotion, or even job loss. Making a costly mistake at home also can mean personal loss or inconvenience that haunts us for a long time. That great new house that was such a good deal turns out to be anything but a bargain when you discover the local schools don't meet your standards. Because of your unwise purchase, the children will have to attend private schools, which in turn means canceling family vacations and making other sacrifices to pay the tuition. In business and at home, unwise purchasing decisions also affect the buyer's ego and self-esteem. When the stakes are so high, a prospective buyer has good reason to be cautious.

The persuasive process also differs because it may take days or even months to complete. In Project 1 you learned about the five-step buying process: Needs, Recognition, Search, Evaluation, and Decision. Each of these steps is more pronounced and prolonged when it comes to purchasing expensive, high-risk items or services. Often the salesperson will be addressing more than one person on the buying end, since in most organizations or families, important and expensive purchases must be approved by several people. In addition, since more risk is involved, the buyer is more likely to raise objections during the process which the seller must be able to tactfully address to the buyer's satisfaction.

COLD CALL SALES

In Project 1 you learned about asking questions to find out about your prospective buyer. You then used the answers to those questions to help the buyer find the most appropriate product. The product was inexpensive, however, so the buyer assumed little risk. The selling situation was different, too. The buyer had already recognized a need for a new toaster and was seeking information about solutions. However, in

many sales situations the buyers don't come to the sellers. Instead, the sellers must seek buyers, calling on businesses that they have targeted as potential markets. These types of sales are called "cold calls."

Cold calls present a special challenge to the salesperson because you are trying to get others to change – to accept a new product or service or way of doing things – when the buyers may not even be aware they even have a need or problem.

People often are hesitant to explore new ways of considering a situation. To them, the status quo is just fine and they are hesitant to do anything that will affect it. Sometimes they are so busy

With cold calls, a salesperson is trying to persuade others to change when the buyers may not even be aware they have a need or a problem.

with day-to-day work that they just don't have time to reflect on their situation and determine ways to improve it. If you try to tell them how to improve it and even explain how these improvements are necessary and will benefit them, the buyers' natural inclination is to resist, especially when the risks are great. People will change only when they see the change as necessary or beneficial. Successful salespeople have discovered that you have to gently encourage buyers to discover for themselves that change is necessary and good, then help them realize

you are the resource who can assist in making the improvement painless.

In Project 1, credibility was discussed as one of the qualities of a successful salesperson. Credibility is demonstrated in your knowledge of your own product, competitors' products, and the industry as a whole. Good communication skills also affect credibility, as does reliability.

When selling expensive items, credibility assumes an even greater role. If people don't like and trust you, they certainly will not give you large sums of money or spend much time speaking with you. This is especially true if they suspect you are misrepresenting yourself and your product, cannot fulfill promises, or simply aren't pleasant to work with. When buyers like and trust you, they will want to spend time with you, give you important information, and continue to buy from you. Your buyer will trust you if you are:

- ▶ honest about yourself, your product, and your experience
- ▶ realistic about what it can and cannot do for the buyer
- ▶ communicative and maintain contact with the buyer, advising him or her of potential problems, offering solutions, and promptly responding to concerns raised by the buyer
- ▶ concerned about the buyer and the buyer's needs, not yourself and your own needs

BE A RESOURCE

Too many salespeople are so concerned about selling their product or service that doing so becomes their priority at the expense of the buyer. Successful salespeople consider the buyer to be their priority, and their own role is to help and serve the buyer.

Today, salespeople position themselves as resources for their buyers – experts in their fields. As an expert, you must be knowledgeable about the business world, trends, and even your competitors. You must also be knowledgeable about the buyers' own businesses – their history, products, and goals – and be able to help them improve their products, productivity, and quality and save the buyers money as well. When you strive to make the buyers' job easier, make their product better, and make the buyers look good to their superiors, co-workers and own customers, the buyers consider you to be on their team, and will be loyal to you and your product.

QUESTION WITH CARE

Project 1 discussed questions to ask to find out about your buyers and their needs and goals. When selling any item, whether expensive or inexpensive, phrase questions in a way that avoids putting buyers on the defensive or making them feel manipulated.

"Wouldn't you like to save thousands of dollars on your telephone calls?" "What if I could prove to you that this widget is just what you need?" "What if I could prove to you that this widget is just what you need?" are common sales approaches you may have heard. The questions immediately cause wariness and discomfort for buyers. If they respond positively, they know a sales pitch will follow. If they respond negatively, it looks like they don't have the best interests of the company or family at heart. Either way, they feel manipulated and foolish. As a salesperson, you want to avoid putting a prospective buyer on the spot. Remember, the buyer is an intelligent person. Your approach should reflect this, and so should the questions you ask.

For example, imagine you are selling Quiknreliable photocopying machines to businesses. You have an appointment with Mr. Spendthrift at Zee Corporation. After introducing yourself and exchanging pleasantries, you begin asking questions.

You: *Mr. Spendthrift, what kind of photocopying equipment are you using now?*

Buyer: *We have a Budgetwise copy machine.*

You: *Budgetwise? I'm familiar with that brand. Do you have the SLO or the SLP model?*

Buyer: *The SLO model. We've had it for about 10 years.*

You: *Yes, they do last a long time. That model is a single-sided copier that produces about 10 pages a minute. How is it working for you?*

Buyer: *Great. It works well. We don't do a lot of copying, so it suits us.*

You: *I'm glad to hear that. It sounds like you're happy and don't have any problems.*

Buyer: *It works pretty good. It does break down sometimes. Usually during busy times, like when we're preparing our annual budget and reports for our board of directors. We make thousands of copies then, and I guess the machine just gets overloaded.*

You: *What happens then?*

Buyer: *The service technician usually doesn't come for a day or more, so we just have to wait until he gets here and fixes it. That delays things a bit. A few times we've had to send some documents to outside vendors for copying.*

You: *So I hear you saying you like the copier but it does break down at critical times and can take a while to be fixed. And sometimes you have to spend extra money to get things copied outside.*

Buyer: *Yes. But that only happens a few times a year. Overall we're happy with it.*

You: *Do you ever need to collate documents?*

Buyer: *Oh, yes. All of our reports have several pages. Our staff collates them by hand.*

You: *I read in the newspaper that your company is expanding and is expected to open new offices in other areas. How will this affect you?*

Buyer: *Well, our workload will definitely increase. We'll have more correspondence and we're also planning to put out monthly reports in addition to the semiannual report.*

You: *That's exciting. What about your staff? Is it going to increase as well?*

Buyer: *Probably not right away. We'll just have to work harder and budget our time better.*

You: *How will your copying situation change?*

- Buyer:** *I haven't thought about that. We'll be copying a lot more, I suppose.*
- You:** *It sounds like you're going to be pretty busy. Are there any circumstances under which you would consider an additional copier or even replacing your current one?*
- Buyer:** *Well, I suppose if we could find one that was reasonably priced, could copy faster – maybe even copy two sides and collate – and the company had a good service contract, we might consider getting a second copier. What does your copier do?*
- You:** *We have copiers that can make up to 25 copies a minute, do double-sided copies, collate up to 30 documents at a time and even staple them. And we guarantee our service technicians will come within three hours of your call. Here's a brochure that describes the different models. I believe the 2FST model may be best for you.*
- Buyer:** *Hmm. It even collates and staples?*
- You:** *It sure does . . . (Proceed to talk about the product's features and benefits as they relate to what you now know about the buyer and his company.) What else would you like to know?*
- Buyer:** *Well, I'd need to know how much money we're talking about, whether we can get a good warranty, and the daily volume the copier could handle. I'd need this in writing so the purchasing officer can review it.*
- You:** *I can draw up a proposal for you that will answer all of those questions. Is there any other information you or the purchasing agent would like? Is there anyone else here who needs this information or with whom we should speak about this? Would you like more brochures?*

If you get this far, most likely you will have a sale. As you conclude the discussion, review what the buyer must do to move the process forward and what you will do as well. "Well, Mr. Spendthrift, you said you'll speak with the purchasing officer and arrange a meeting. Meanwhile, I'll draw up a proposal based on what we just discussed . . ."

Notice how you, the seller, often used questions that began with "what" or "how," and that through questions you allowed the buyer to reflect on his copying situation without being pressured or put on the defensive. The buyer probably had not thought much about the photocopying machine in the course of his daily work, much less considered how the volume of photocopying will change in the future. He recognized a potential problem and discovered a solution with your help. You did not even mention your own product until the buyer indicated he was ready to consider it as a solution to the problem. And at no time did you make negative comments about the buyer's current copier or the labor-intensive method the buyer currently was using to collate documents. Notice, too, that you had literature to give to the buyer. Good-quality brochures and other materials about your product add to your credibility and give buyers information they can refer to later and show others if necessary.

Not every contact will result in a sale, though. There will be times when the potential buyer is adamant about not having a problem and is not interested in your product or when your product will not satisfy the buyer's situation. A wise salesperson will recognize this and not try to change the buyer's mind.

ADDRESSING OBJECTIONS

Occasionally a buyer may raise objections or concerns about your product. "It's too expensive" or "That won't work for us" are common remarks salespeople hear.

You can avoid objections by listening to the customer's answers to your questions and demonstrating how your product can indeed help the customer. If your product really isn't the answer to

the buyer's problem, the buyer has a legitimate objection. Acknowledge it and depart graciously. If you already know potential problems with your product exist, acknowledge them and provide an explanation and reassurance. For example, if you know your product is priced higher than a competitor's product, be honest about it, then point out how your product is different from and better than that of the competitor and how these features and benefits make it worth the higher price.

Another way to prevent objections is to wait until the buyer indicates he or she is ready to consider a solution to the problem you've helped them discover and clarify. Discussing your product too soon, before the buyer has recognized and acknowledged a problem exists, can make the buyer defensive and resistant.

Even with careful planning, however, you still may get an objection. Don't ignore it. Listen carefully, acknowledge the concern, then consider it. Is there a misunderstanding? Did you not explain something clearly? You may want to provide additional information or explain it differently.

Perhaps the objection is the symptom of a hidden problem or an area you didn't consider when asking questions. You may need to probe further with "what" and "how" questions and use the answers to discover the hidden problem.

Occasionally a buyer will raise an objection that, in some cases, can be considered irrelevant. For example, suppose you are selling automobiles and a buyer is seriously considering a particular model – the last one you have and you won't be receiving any more. As the buyer examines the car, she says, "This upholstery looks too boring." Instead of becoming defensive or contradicting the buyer, you could say, "It is a little bland, isn't it? Now, would you like to see the compact disc player?" You've acknowledged the problem, decided you couldn't do anything about it, and determined that such a small complaint is unlikely to prevent a sale. You then moved on.

YOUR ASSIGNMENT

This project consists of five parts. First, before the club meeting, select a partner and together choose a scenario to role play for five to seven minutes. You will play the part of a salesperson making a cold call, selling an expensive product of your choice. Your partner will play the role of the prospective buyer. Perhaps you are selling office equipment or a maintenance service, exercise equipment, or security systems. If possible you may want to have brochures or other literature to refer to and give to the prospective buyer.

Do not rehearse. Be sure to read about role plays in the Appendix, and make sure your partner does, too.

Then, for your presentation you will present a three- to four-minute speech about the persuasive process used in cold call sales of expensive items. This will help your audience to better understand the presentation's objectives and to evaluate the presentation. Next, you will briefly introduce your partner and the scenario you have chosen to role play. Finally, you will enact the five- to seven-minute scene with your partner.

You will conclude with a short (two to three minutes), informal discussion with your partner and your audience about the persuasive process which took place. You may want to ask what you could say or do differently to be more effective and other similar questions.

EVALUATION GUIDE FOR **CONQUERING THE COLD CALL**

Title _____

Evaluator _____ Date _____

Note to the Evaluator: The purpose of this presentation is for the speaker to enact a role play with another member. The speaker plays the role of a salesperson selling an expensive product or service making a cold call on a prospective buyer. The product/service being sold is determined by the speaker. The speaker is to give a brief speech about the persuasive process used in cold call sales to help the audience better understand the presentation's objectives and to evaluate the presentation. The speaker is to introduce the role play and the partner, then conduct the role play. Finally, the speaker is to lead a brief discussion with the partner and the audience about the role play. It is suggested you read the entire project before the presentation. In addition to your verbal evaluation, please give written responses to the questions below:

- ▶ How well did the speaker explain the persuasive process used in cold call sales of expensive items?

- ▶ How effective were the speaker's questions in eliciting information from the buyer?

- ▶ How effective were the speaker's questions in helping the buyer discover a problem exists?

- ▶ Did the speaker avoid talking about his product until the buyer asked about it?

- ▶ How well did the speaker handle any objections or concerns the buyer raised?

- ▶ What could the speaker have said that would have been more effective?

- ▶ What did the speaker do well?

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

If you want approval for your plans, you must present your ideas in a manner that positively influences the audience. Make sure your proposal answers the following questions: What is my objective? Who is my audience? What does my audience want or need? What do you want the audience to do? What is the plan? What would the results be? Conclude by asking the audience to approve it.

OBJECTIVES:

- ▶ Prepare a proposal advocating an idea or course of action.
- ▶ Organize the proposal using the six-step method provided.

Time: Five to seven minutes

THE WINNING PROPOSAL

Another type of persuasive process is the proposal. In business and in communities, proposals are a way to present your ideas to a group of people in hopes of persuading the group to accept them. For example, a department manager may need approval from his superiors to modify his department's structure, so he develops a proposal. Perhaps a school principal must convince the school board to purchase new textbooks; she presents a proposal to the board. A design engineer wants to improve one of her company's products, so she drafts a proposal to present to her boss.

If you want approval for your plans or projects, you must present your ideas in a manner that positively influences the audience. A carefully developed proposal is ideal for accomplishing this. In this project you'll learn the six steps to creating a proposal that is sure to be approved.

A ROAD MAP FOR SUCCESS

Drafting a proposal is somewhat like planning a cross-country trip by automobile. Without a road map, you will have difficulty reaching your destination. You can ensure your proposal's success if you ask yourself the following questions:

1. **What is my objective?** Your objective is the basis for your entire proposal. Ask yourself, "What do I want this proposal to accomplish? What do I want to happen?" Write it down. Keep it short, simple, and focused. Suppose your boss has asked you to figure out ways to stop burglaries that have been plaguing the company. You investigate and draft a proposal for preventing thefts. "To increase company security" is too vague an objective for an effective proposal. "To stop company losses from theft by installing a security system" is more clear and focused. You should be able to state your objective in fewer than 25 words.

Be sure to focus only on your immediate objective. Perhaps your ultimate objective is to install a high-tech system. But if you were asked only to determine ways to prevent the burglaries, you know you must first get management to approve the installation of any security system at all. In this case, your immediate objective would be to get approval for a security system. Once management does this, then you could prepare and present a proposal for the laser beam security system.

2. **Who is my audience?** Your audience is the group to whom you are presenting the proposal. It should be a person or a group of people who have authority to act on the proposal. Are these people knowledgeable in the subject matter of your proposal? What are their positions in the community or company? Do these people report to anyone else? Would anyone else influence them – such as

accountants, systems analysts, etc. – that you should consider? The more you can find out about your audience, the more effective you can make the proposal.

3. **What does my audience want or need?** What are its interests? If you want the audience to accept your proposal, you must present it in such a way that listeners will be receptive to it. You must address the issue from your audience's point of view, not from your own. For example, if your proposal requires your company to spend a sizable amount of money, you should know the company's present financial situation and the impact your proposal would have. Is the budget limited, or has it been increased? Have there been cutbacks and layoffs, or is the company presently hiring? Would your proposal ultimately save the company money? You should also be aware of its plans for the future. Is it planning to expand? What are its plans to stay competitive in the marketplace? Your proposal should address these needs and interests and point out how your plan will affect them.

Determining your audience's wants, needs, and interests may be the most difficult task in developing a proposal, since the information you need may not be readily accessible. You may have to conduct research, read reports and talk with people. Use your questioning and listening skills to find the data you need.

4. **What do you want the audience to do?** The purpose of your proposal is to convince the audience to take some action. What action do you want them to take? Your proposal should include a simple statement clearly indicating exactly what you want the audience to do. "To reduce company losses from theft, I propose you authorize the installation of a security system."
5. **What is the plan?** The proposal should include a review of how the proposed plan will work. Avoid going into too much detail. Too much information can overwhelm and confuse listeners, while too little information will only create questions and doubt. Put yourself in the audience's position. If you were in the audience, what would you want to know to make a decision? A key to giving the right amount of information is to see that your plan answers the basic who, what, when, where and why questions. Offer supporting information where it would be helpful and include costs when appropriate.
6. **What would the results be?** Provide the benefits the plan would produce. "A security system would reduce or eliminate burglaries up to 80 percent, and the company would save \$50,000 in lost inventory annually." Make sure the benefits correspond to the needs, wants, and interests of your audience.

Conclude your proposal by asking your audience to approve it. Often people are afraid to take this step for fear of rejection. But, as mentioned in previous projects, if you don't ask for a decision, you most likely won't get one.

When possible, provide a time frame, too. "If you authorize a security system today, we can have it installed by next Friday." Your audience likes to know when they can expect to see results if they approve your proposal.

After you've finished writing your proposal, review it carefully and consider the buying process discussed in Project 1. People will not buy until they complete the five-step buying process. Your proposal should lead them through the buying process. If your proposal doesn't do this, make changes accordingly.

If you want the audience to accept your proposal, you must address the issue from the audience's point of view.

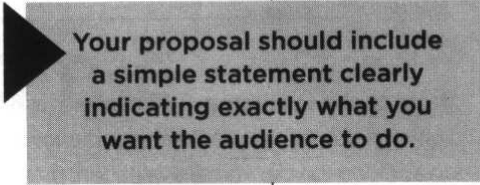
YOUR PRESENTATION

As you prepare, remember to keep your presentation:

- ▶ **Clear.** Avoid complicated sentences and technical words.
- ▶ **Logical.** Make sure your ideas flow logically and sequentially so your listeners can easily follow and understand your message.
- ▶ **Objective.** Point out not only the positive aspects of your proposal, but any negative aspects as well. If possible, offer recommendations for overcoming the negative aspects.

YOUR ASSIGNMENT

Using material drawn from your profession or other interests, design and present a five- to seven-minute proposal that advocates an idea or course of action which you would like a group of people to accept. If you wish your fellow Toastmasters members to assume a role, have the Toastmaster of the meeting explain the role in advance. Follow the process described above as you prepare and present your proposal.



Your proposal should include a simple statement clearly indicating exactly what you want the audience to do.

EVALUATION GUIDE FOR **THE WINNING PROPOSAL**

Title _____

Evaluator _____ Date _____

Note to the Evaluator: The speaker is asked to prepare and present a proposal advocating an idea or course of action which he or she would like the audience to approve. It is suggested you read the entire project before the presentation. In addition to your verbal evaluation, please give written responses to the questions below.

- ▶ How clear was the proposal's objective?

- ▶ How well was the proposal directed to the intended audience?

- ▶ Did the speaker address the negative and positive aspects of the proposal?

- ▶ Was the proposal well-organized and logical?

- ▶ How effective was the speaker's delivery?

- ▶ What could the speaker have said to make the proposal more effective?

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Occasionally speakers must address listeners on a controversial issue or subject, one on which your viewpoint differs. A speech of this type requires sensitivity and tact. Acknowledge your listeners' viewpoint, then present your own and its benefits. Find points of agreement. Illustrate your points with stories and anecdotes, project credibility and use humor. When answering questions, remain calm and answer in a positive manner, concluding with a positive statement.

OBJECTIVES:

- Prepare a talk on a controversial subject that persuades an audience to accept or at least consider your viewpoint.
- Construct the speech to appeal to the audience's logic and emotions.

Time: Seven to nine minutes for the speech, and two to three minutes for the question-and-answer period

ADDRESSING THE OPPOSITION

Business people, government officials, and community leaders occasionally must speak on controversial issues or subjects to audiences holding opposing viewpoints. Such situations provide a challenge to speakers. Not only must speakers present their own viewpoint and reasoning, they also must address opposing viewpoints and refute them so that the audience agrees with – or at least is more receptive to – their viewpoint. In this project, you will learn how to persuade an audience to at least consider, if not accept, your viewpoint on a controversial issue, and answer a few questions the audience may have about your viewpoint.

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

As learned in previous projects, knowing as much as possible about your audience is key to making a sale or getting your proposal accepted. This also is true when addressing an audience on a controversial issue or subject. To be successful, you must construct your talk so it addresses their concerns. For example, suppose you will be speaking to an audience of senior citizens about why they should vote for a proposed tax increase. What are the issues for your audience? What are their main points of concern? Imagine that your analysis shows most of your audience are on fixed incomes, with little money to spare. They also are upset because many services the city offers to senior citizens have been reduced in the past few years. Your talk should address these points.

CONSTRUCTING YOUR SPEECH

A speech of this nature requires sensitivity and tact in preparation. If you appear too aggressive, your audience will become argumentative. If you aren't forceful enough, they will tune you out. You want to impress them as a sincere, friendly, and concerned person who deserves their courteous attention.

As you plan your speech, be sure to address the following:


- **Your position on the issue or subject.** Be honest and direct with your audience, telling them your position within the first minute or so of your talk. If you avoid telling them, you could confuse them or cause them to distrust you.
- **Opposing viewpoints.** Your listeners' willingness to hear you and consider your views is enhanced when you acknowledge their viewpoints and the opposing viewpoints that others have. Use the information you gathered earlier about your audience and their concerns. Acknowledge these views and concerns, then carefully explain why they don't have merit. Back up your explanations with facts whenever possible. Use tact, however, or you may offend or anger listeners.

- ▶ **Benefits of your viewpoint.** Your audience will want to know why they should believe in your viewpoint. Point out the benefits your viewpoint offers them. Again, back them up with facts and be tactful. Show respect and concern for your listeners and their point of view.
- ▶ **Points of agreement.** Your audience will be more receptive to your persuasive efforts if you identify areas where you and the listeners do agree. For example, your audience of senior citizens wants a safer, crime-free community, and so do you. Point this out to your audience and identify ways the tax increase will provide this.
- ▶ **Call to action.** The closing should ask your audience to do something, whether it is to vote as you recommended, write to government officials, or donate money to your cause. No matter how persuasive your speech, if your audience doesn't act your efforts are for naught.

ENHANCE THE MESSAGE

How you present your viewpoint has as much an impact as its content. You can enhance your persuasive message even more if you:

- ▶ **Illustrate your points with stories and anecdotes.** Support facts with examples, stories, anecdotes, metaphors, and analogies.
- ▶ **Use descriptive words.** Creating strong, vivid images in listeners' minds helps them remember what you say.
- ▶ **Show your commitment.** Don't be afraid to show your own belief in your viewpoint. Use your voice and gestures to convey concern, anger, and worry where appropriate, and be enthusiastic and cheerful when necessary. Don't overdo it, however. If you appear to be acting, your credibility will diminish.
- ▶ **Draw on listeners' emotions.** While your message is based on reason, an emotional appeal helps, too. If you are addressing an audience of parents at a school function, you could appeal to their love for their children and their desire to protect and nurture them. Likewise, invoking a sense of patriotism may help persuade an audience of military veterans.
- ▶ **Use humor.** Humor can help you establish a bond with the audience. It is a good ice breaker and indicates that you don't take yourself or the occasion too seriously. It also keeps the audience interested and helps defuse negativity, making them more receptive to your message.
- ▶ **Project credibility.** Your appearance has a great effect on an audience's perception of you and your message. Dress in clean, well-fitting clothes and select your clothing according to the speaking situation.
- ▶ **Maintain eye contact.** In most cultures, the act of looking someone directly in the eyes is a symbol of sincerity. Failure to meet another person's gaze when speaking implies disinterest, lack of confidence, insincerity or shiftiness. Speakers who establish eye contact are considered more truthful, honest, credible, friendly, and skillful than those who do not. By looking at your listeners as individuals, you can convince them you are sincere and care about them.
- ▶ **Pay attention to your voice.** Psychologist Albert Mehrabian found that people are five times as likely to be influenced by voice than by the words actually spoken by a speaker, so use your voice as a persuasive tool. A good speaking voice should be loud enough to be heard, clear



Enhance your audience's willingness to hear and consider your views by acknowledging their own and other opposing viewpoints.

enough to be understood, expressive enough to be interesting, and pleasing enough to be enjoyable. Practice your presentation, paying special attention to these vocal qualities.

FIELDING QUESTIONS

Often after this type of talk you will be expected to answer questions from the audience. How you handle the question-and-answer period is just as important as the speech you present. An inappropriate response to a question can ruin any positive impact your speech may have had. You should devote as much time preparing for the question-and-answer session as you devote to preparing the speech. You'll be successful if you do the following:

- ▶ **Anticipate possible questions and prepare your answers beforehand.**
- ▶ **Remain calm.** Don't become angry or impatient. Be courteous at all times, even when people are rude to you.
- ▶ **Answer one question at a time.** Sometimes one person will ask a series of questions. Answer only one, and make sure it is the one that allows you to communicate your objective. If the person tries to interrupt you, ignore the interruption, complete your thought and then call on the next person.
- ▶ **Answer all questions in a positive manner.** Don't repeat a negative question or statement before you give an answer. For example, someone asks, "Why are you against allowing senior citizens to ride free on city buses?" Answering the question with "I am opposed to it because . . ." gives a negative feeling and can imply that the transportation difficulties faced by senior citizens are not of concern to you. A better response would be, "I know that transportation can be difficult for senior citizens. It's important for you to be able to visit family, friends and doctors, to shop, go to the theater and enjoy dining out. But our city's public transportation system already operates at a deficit and there are more than 50,000 citizens over the age of 65 living in our city . . ."
- ▶ **Handle hostile questions with care.** Address your response to the audience as a whole rather than to the person asking the question, and avoid eye contact with the person after you've answered. So the person doesn't have an opportunity to ask a follow-up question, immediately after answering the question, call on someone in another part of the room.
- ▶ **Conclude with a positive statement.** Often your original message may be forgotten following a question-and-answer period. End the session with a strong closing statement that reiterates your position.

YOUR ASSIGNMENT

For this project, prepare, rehearse, and deliver a seven- to nine-minute speech to persuade an audience to accept or at least consider your side of a controversial issue or subject following the recommendations provided. Select a generally unpopular point of view to ensure your audience will be opposed to it. After your speech, field questions from the audience for two to three minutes.

An inappropriate response to a question can ruin any positive impact your speech may have had.

EVALUATION GUIDE FOR **ADDRESSING THE OPPOSITION**

Title _____

Evaluator _____ Date _____

Note to the Evaluator: In this presentation, the speaker is to persuade an audience to accept or at least consider his or her viewpoint on a controversial subject. The talk should appeal to the audience both logically and emotionally. The speaker is then to field questions from the audience. In addition to your verbal evaluation, please give written answers to the questions below.

- ▶ How convincing was the speaker's presentation on his or her viewpoint?

- ▶ How effectively did the speaker appeal to listeners' logic and emotions?

- ▶ How well did the speaker use stories, anecdotes, and humor to add impact to the presentation?

- ▶ Did the speaker appear sincere, friendly, and concerned for the audience?

- ▶ How did the speaker's voice and use of eye contact contribute to the presentation's effectiveness?

- ▶ How persuasive did you find the speech? Why?

- ▶ What could the speaker have said to be more effective?

- ▶ What did the speaker say that was especially effective?

- ▶ How prepared did the speaker appear to be for the questions that were asked?

- ▶ How effective was the speaker in responding in a positive manner to the questions that were asked?

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Leaders are persuasive. They use speech to organize people and urge them to higher levels of achievement than they could reach independently. You can demonstrate leadership by communicating your vision and mission to others and convince them to take action. Be enthusiastic, and tell lively and dramatic stories that relate to the points you are making.

OBJECTIVES:

- ▶ Communicate your vision and mission to an audience.
- ▶ Convince your audience to work toward achieving your vision and mission.

Time: Six to eight minutes

THE PERSUASIVE LEADER

Throughout history people have valued those who stood up and spoke out on behalf of the ideals the people professed to have, although they seldom acted upon them. For decades black people in the United States were ignored and mistreated until civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. spoke up and unified people in a movement that led to sweeping social reforms. Mother Teresa, the Sisters of Mercy nun dedicated to helping the poor, spoke up about the plights of the indigent and moved thousands of people to action with her moral conviction and determination.

Such people who stood and spoke became leaders largely because they were able to clarify and validate the feelings, hopes, and ideals of the people, and then were able to unify and motivate the people to act. Leaders are, by nature, persuasive speakers. They use speech to organize people and urge them to higher levels of achievement than they could reach independently.

You don't have to be a Martin Luther King Jr. or Mother Teresa to make changes. Average citizens, working together toward a purpose, can make contributions as valuable as those of these famous people. You can instigate great changes in your community, workplace, or even your Toastmasters club if you master persuasive speaking. In this project you'll prepare and present a speech to motivate your audience to help you achieve a goal.

THE INSPIRATIONAL LEADER

Most people want to have a sense of purpose. They want to work toward goals that will benefit themselves, their families, and their communities. They have vague ideas for changes that will correct injustices and improve the quality of life for everyone. But they are so consumed with the challenges of everyday life that they don't believe they have the time or the energy to devote to a cause. They often feel overwhelmed and powerless to change the status quo.

Leaders understand these people and their lives. Perhaps they even live such a life themselves. They have a sense of what these people want, what they value, what they hope for, and the everyday challenges and struggles they endure. The main difference, however, is their attitude. Leaders are optimistic. They can look beyond the tribulations of everyday life and envision the wonderful possibilities that exist. They are able to express the wants, values, and hopes of the people and make them seem possible. With the strength of their beliefs, they are able to unify the people and channel their collective energy toward their common goals.

Leaders can clarify and validate people's feelings, hopes, and ideals and can unify and motivate people to act.

Such leaders have several characteristics:

1. **They have a vision.** They imagine what they would like to happen in the future. Their vision gives them purpose and direction, which they turn into goals, plans, and activities. They can mentally envision the scene they want to happen. Suppose you want to improve the community park system. You begin by imagining the parks you would like to see: plenty of soft, green grass; beautiful trees and colorful flowers; swings and slides filled with laughing children; couples walking hand in hand along the winding sidewalks and families picnicking underneath the trees.
2. **They have a mission.** A mission is a simplified version of a vision. It's a short statement that defines the purpose and foundation for leadership efforts. For example, if you want to improve your Toastmasters club meetings, your mission might be "To have well-organized, well-attended, enjoyable meetings where participants are prepared to fulfill their roles and members are enthusiastic and supportive, thus enabling all members to achieve their self-development goals."
3. **They communicate the vision and mission to others.** A vision and mission seen only by the leader are not enough. A leader must get others to see the vision and convince them to achieve the mission as well. A leader must communicate and explain the vision and mission in a positive, compelling manner so others understand them.
4. **They convince others to take action.** A leader must understand the needs and wants of others and be able to verbally tie the vision and mission to those needs and wants. What will achieving the vision and mission mean to them? How will they benefit? When the benefits of taking action outweigh the benefits of the status quo, people will be motivated to help you achieve the vision and mission.

A leader must understand the needs and wants of others and be able to verbally tie the vision and mission to those needs and wants.

COMMUNICATING THE VISION AND MISSION

Following are tips for creating a presentation that unifies, convinces and motivates a group of people to achieve a vision and mission:

- ▶ **Create vivid images.** Use descriptive, colorful words. Define concepts in terms that are easily visualized.
- ▶ **Use stories and anecdotes.** Tell lively and interesting stories that relate to the points you are making. Tell true stories about others who have overcome adversity to achieve.
- ▶ **Dramatize.** Use body language, gestures, and facial expressions to add emotion and emphasis to your words. Act out what you are telling them.
- ▶ **Be enthusiastic.** If you want your audience to be enthusiastic about your vision and mission, you yourself must be enthusiastic. Show excitement as you speak. Your enthusiasm indicates you strongly believe in what you are proposing.

YOUR ASSIGNMENT

For this project, select a vision and mission of your choice. Then prepare, rehearse, and deliver a six- to eight-minute speech designed to communicate the vision and mission to your audience and persuade them to join you in making the vision and mission reality. Use all of the skills you have learned to make your presentation powerful. If you wish your audience to assume a role, have the Toastmaster of the meeting explain the role in advance.

EVALUATION GUIDE FOR **THE PERSUASIVE LEADER**

Title _____

Evaluator _____ Date _____

Note to the Evaluator: The purpose of this presentation is for the speaker to communicate a vision and mission and convince the audience to help achieve them. It is suggested you read the project before hearing the presentation. In addition to your verbal evaluation, please provide written responses to the questions below.

- ▶ How effectively did the speaker convey the vision and mission?

- ▶ How did the speaker connect the vision and mission to the needs, wants, and hopes of the audience?

- ▶ Did the speaker use stories and anecdotes to enhance the persuasive message?

- ▶ What other devices (gestures, body language, facial expressions, etc.) did the speaker use to make the presentation more persuasive?

- ▶ Did the speaker convince and motivate the audience to act?

- ▶ What could the speaker have said to be more effective?

- ▶ What did the speaker do well?

THE ROLE PLAY

In a role play, you are asked to pretend to be yourself, or another person, in a particular situation. You are asked to behave as you believe you (or the other person) would under the circumstances.

You may think this sounds like acting, but it is not. An actor's goal is to bring to life the writer's ideas to influence and entertain an audience. In a role play, the people involved are not concerned with the audience, only with themselves. Their goal is to think, react, and behave as closely as possible to the way someone placed in that particular situation would think, react, and behave.

A role play contains two basic elements: a scenario and a set of role descriptions. The scenario is the situation or environment in which the role play takes place, and it may include constraints.

For example, one scenario could be: You have worked for several years for a small company. You have an idea for a new product and you want to sell it to an existing client. The role descriptions involved would be those for you and a prospective buyer. You are described as a hard-working employee who is knowledgeable about the products you sell. The prospective buyer is defined as shy, quiet, and miserly. Working with this scenario, you must try to influence the buyer to purchase one of your new products. Your partner must respond as the buyer within that defined role.

Both of you must appropriately deal with each other's responses. After the role play is over, analyze the interaction and identify what you could say or do differently to be more effective.

The purpose of a role play is to give you the opportunity to learn and practice interacting with others in a non-threatening environment. The role play projects in this manual give you the chance to study and practice the skills needed to handle challenging, real-life persuasive situations. Role plays benefit everyone: They help you as a communicator understand the persuasive process better, and the audience observes the interaction and draws lessons from it as well.

For the first two projects in this manual, you will participate in a role play. You will select the situation or scenario in which the role play takes place and define each participant's role. You may not rehearse the role play or discuss it in any other manner. Your behavior and words during the actual presentation before the club should be spontaneous.

PROJECT COMPLETION RECORD **PERSUASIVE SPEAKING**

PROJECT	SPEECH TITLE	DATE	VICE PRESIDENT EDUCATION'S INITIALS
1. The Effective Salesperson			
2. Conquering the Cold Call			
3. The Winning Proposal			
4. Addressing the Opposition			
5. The Persuasive Leader			

Save this page to verify your completion of the projects in this manual. Submit the Project Completion Record form from the appropriate manuals when applying for the Advanced Communicator Bronze, Advanced Communicator Silver, or Advanced Communicator Gold awards.