

Secrets of Persuasion



Based on 20 years of working with salespeople, we have listed 10 “secrets” that effective salespeople use to compel their customers. Interestingly, these are the same methods that effective CEOs use to compel their board, their employees, and the public.

The real secret is that effective persuaders try new methods without compromising their *natural persuasive style*. For instance, if you are not a natural extrovert, you can still use #1 to your advantage by being more engaged in conversations. Remember that you are most effective when you act naturally, but also experiment with and adapt methods used by master persuaders.

1. Listen Actively	Effective persuaders listen until it hurts. They may be impatient and assertive, but they also know how to ask questions. They believe that the attention they give to others is an “act of generosity”, even if it takes a lot of energy. Tom Peters has said, “You should fire your CEO every 5 years as a matter of course, because if he’s listening as much as he should, he’d be absolutely exhausted by then.”
2. Boost Others’ Esteem	A wise persuader once said, “The reason I’m so popular is that people <i>like who they are</i> when they’re with me.” Effective persuaders find ways to make people feel good. They don’t give insincere praise, but they avoid criticism and find ways to verbalize others’ unique talents.
3. Pre-Sell	Effective persuaders pre-sell their ideas. They think ahead and anticipate controversy. They go to their “adversaries” to work out problems before they get out of hand. They never pull surprises in meetings.
4. Admit Fault	The best persuaders are confident enough to eat crow. They apologize easily even when it’s the other person’s fault. They don’t get defensive when confronted.
5. Avoid Doubt	Effective persuaders don’t use tentative language such as “perhaps” or “maybe”. They state their positions clearly. They aren’t <i>overly</i> confident, but are willing to say, “Tell me if I’m wrong, but this is what I believe.”
6. Embrace Conflict	Fear of conflict is the 2 nd most powerful force in the universe (next to gravity), but effective persuaders learn to deal with conflict. They address an issue promptly before it escalates or turns into a cold war. They soften the pain for the other person by using phrases such as, “Something has been bothering me,” or “Do you mind if I talked about something uncomfortable?”
7. Do Homework	Effective persuaders know their facts. They don’t rely on hearsay. They pay attention to numbers. They can speak briefly, but are prepared to back their positions with additional details.
8. Show Character	Persuaders compel people with integrity and guts. They never duck difficult issues or play games. They earn trust by following through on promises. They avoid any hint of prejudice, obscenity, or a demeaning attitude.
9. Articulate	Effective persuaders speak briefly and clearly. They don’t ramble or bore people with irrelevant details. They are adept with public speaking and impromptu talks.
10. Relate	Effective persuaders build relationships, not just acquaintances. They spend time to get to know people and their real needs. They build broad networks, and maintain them. They are ‘givers’, not ‘takers’. People trust them because they know them.