

The Library Persuasion Game

Ever have trouble getting people on board with your great ideas for new library services? The Library Persuasion Game can help you communicate with other librarians and your patrons more effectively.

What is it?

The Library Persuasion Game was designed to help librarians practice Robert Cialdini's six principles of influence by improvising persuasive arguments.

How to Play

The game is for two players at a time. Each player improvises a different role.

One player is "the Boss", who holds the stack of 48 idea cards. "The Persuasive Librarian" holds the six influence cards. The Boss chooses an idea, and the Persuasive Librarian improvises a persuasive argument for it based on the influence cards.

EXAMPLE GAME

The Boss holds up the Chainsaw Carving idea card: "I've heard some office chatter lately that someone has been planning a chainsaw carving class. Do you know anything about this?"

PL: "Oh, that's my idea! I'm really excited about it, let me tell you all about it."

PL, holds up the **AUTHORITY** card: "So, my old college friend, Paul Bunyonsen, is a pretty well-respected wood carver. He's putting a show together at that fancy new gallery up in Sheyboygan."

PL, holds up the **SOCIAL PROOF** card: "I was at the State Fair last year and I saw this huge crowd of people. I wanted to see what was going

on, and it turned out they were watching Paul. He was just covered in sawdust and wood chips, carving some of the most amazing stuff."

PL, holds up the **LIKING** card: "Lately we've been getting together for brunch at the Waffle House every few weeks...but when I saw him at the State Fair I hadn't seen him since my University days up in Oshkosh. Go badgers!"

PL holds up the **COMMITMENT & CONSISTENCY** card: "Anyway, the new strategic plan is for us to put together innovative programs that appeal to people in our rustic, wooded community. And so I thought, what better way to do that than with chainsaws?"

PL holds up the **SCARCITY** card: "The summer is just around the corner and Paul's schedule fills up quickly. So that's why I'm looking into it now."

The Boss: "This all sounds nice. But chainsaws? In the library? Won't it be dangerous?"

PL holds up the **RECIPROCITY** card. "OK. How about we just get Paul to do a talk about his work, and maybe a little demo. You've got to admit, this does kind of go along with some of our other craft related events, like your quilting exhibit that went so well last summer."

The Boss: "Weirdly enough, this is starting to make a lot of sense." (The boss can encourage the persuasive librarian to keep going by being generally incredulous throughout the exchange, or by being difficult or hard to convince.)

The Principles of Influence

The six Influence Cards are based on the work of Robert Cialdini. He developed a model of persuasion he calls “the principles of influence.” These six principles can help you communicate more persuasively—here’s a brief overview.

RECIPROCITY

Reciprocity is a social norm—people want to repay favors. Be sure to help other people make their ideas a reality, and then when you need something you’ll be more likely to get it.

Also, be sure to ask for something big up front. Cialdini calls this the “door in the face” technique. If the person you’re negotiating with rejects your initial offer you can counter with a smaller one. They will be more likely to say “yes” to the second, smaller request.

COMMITMENT & CONSISTENCY

When a person commits to something, either orally or in writing, they are very likely to be stubbornly consistent with that commitment.

To study this technique, a researcher called residents of Indiana and asked them to predict if they would spend three hours collecting money for the American Cancer Society if asked. They often said yes. When a representative from the American Cancer Society called a few days later, the ACS saw a 700% increase in volunteers.

In the library world you can often link your plan to strategic initiatives to see commitment and consistency in action.

SOCIAL PROOF

Social proof is very powerful in situations where people are unsure of themselves, or when there are similarities to the current situation. Other people’s actions become cues to behave a certain way.

For example—baristas in a coffee shop often put a few bills in the tip jar to encourage patrons to tip. When people see evidence of tipping they’re more likely to tip as well.

AUTHORITY

When we go to see a doctor, we usually don’t question their authority. We tend to trust experts.

A patient goes to the hospital for an ear infection. The doctor writes the following note to tell the nurse which ear to inject the medicine in: “r ear”. The nurse reads the note and promptly injects the medicine in the patient’s butt. Even though both knew the patient was there for an ear infection, neither thought to question the doctor’s authority.

LIKING

People are often influenced by people they like. In cases where people don’t already know each other, they tend to like people who are attractive, with a similar background to their own, and with the same traits, opinions and lifestyles.

In the world of libraries, “liking” seems to be at play when we use studies of our patrons, or examples of patron behavior, as evidence for arguments.

SCARCITY

We are more compelled to take advantage of opportunities when the opportunities seem limited. People feel stronger about the possibility of losing something more than gaining something.

One tactic is using a deadline- people are quick to act when they feel urgency, when time is of the essence. Failure to act may result in a lost opportunity.

References

Cialdini, R. B. (2006). Influence: The psychology of persuasion. New York: Harper Business.

Credits

Isabel Gonzalez-Smith, John Jung and Leo Lo developed the Library Persuasion Game for I2C2: Innovation, Inspiration, and Creativity Conference, for libraries. The conference was held in Manchester, UK in 2014.

You can print the Library Persuasion Game yourself. The included templates work with printable business cards like the Avery 8873 cards with eight cards per sheet.

AUTHORITY

Cite good sources. If you are not an authority on your idea, find someone who is and get them on board. Do your homework. You owe it to your audience. And practice, practice, practice.

COMMITMENT & CONSISTENCY

Is there a way this idea can be modified to fit what your audience is already doing? Make it fit with the mission statement. How does this idea help serve the library's unique community?

LIKING

Tell stories about people. Who will benefit from your idea? Use photographs and names. Find ways to be kind to your audience. People want to work with people who like them.

SCARCITY

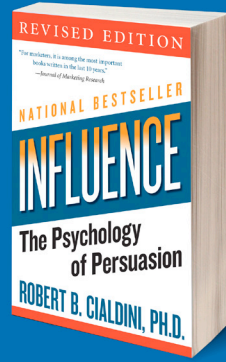
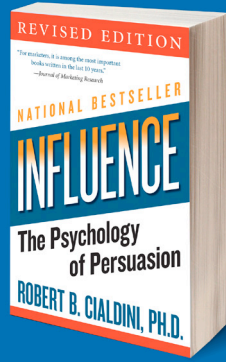
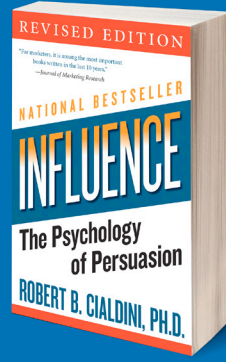
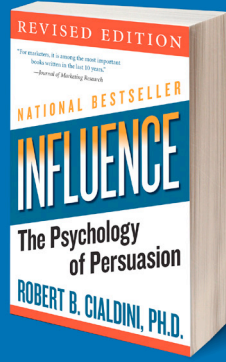
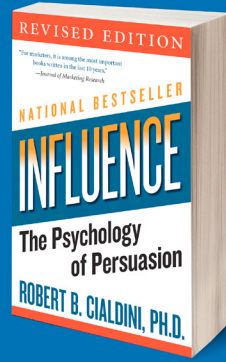
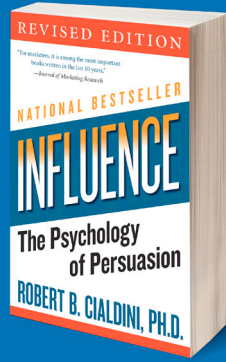
Give important decision-makers the chance to hear your idea first, when it's still exclusive information. Be ready for important deadlines like the end of the fiscal year. Strike when the iron is hot.

RECIPROCITY

The old give and take. Ask big up front, then counter with a smaller, safer backup request. Help people get what they want to get what you want. When in doubt, bring donuts.

SOCIAL PROOF

Show lots of examples. They work shockingly well. Find similar projects at similar libraries, and show lots of people using services like the one you're pitching. Everyone is doing it.



VIDEO EQUIPMENT RENTAL

TWISTER CHAMPIONSHIPS

WRITERS WORKSHOP

BICYCLE RENTAL

**EVERY 1000TH CHECKOUT
WINS A PRIZE**

MEDIEVAL SIEGE WEAPONS WORKSHOP

STRANGE PERFORMANCE ART

CAR REPAIR CLUB



**ENORMOUS BREAKFAST,
SERVED ALL DAY**

CHAINSAW CARVING CLASS

PRIMAL SCREAM THERAPY

BEER BREWING CLUB

MCDONALD'S FOOD SERVICE

CHEESE-MAKING WORKSHOP

FOOTBALL GAME SCREENING

DANCE MARATHON



BLACKSMITHING WORKSHOP

**WORLD SERIES
OF POKER**

WOODWORKING CLUB

KARATE CLASS

**RELIGIOUS GURUS
IN RESIDENCE**

BED-IN

MASSAGE

SOUP KITCHEN



POWER TOOL RENTAL

TATTOO PARLOR

PUNK ROCK CLUB

COFFEE SHOP

DARTBOARDS

MAKERSPACE

ROOFTOP GARDEN

BEEKEEPING



WANDERING JUGGLERS

HOT TUBS

PROFESSIONAL CUDDLERS

**“BRING YOUR PET TO THE
LIBRARY” DAY**

TREADMILLS AND EXERCISE EQUIPMENT

FISH AND CHIPS NIGHT

ART GALLERY

SAUNA



GLASSBLOWING

PET RENTAL

AMUSE BOUCHE

WILD ANIMAL REHABILITATION

EMERGENCY SLEEPING SPACE

MOVING SCREENING NIGHT

“FIGHT CLUB”

**SENSORY DEPRIVATION
CHAMBERS**

