

**PINPOINT**

There are some people who know very well where the weapons of automatic influence lie and who employ them regularly and expertly.

Robert Cialdini

The research

Robert Cialdini's collection of social psychology research has uncovered and systematised exactly how influence happens.

The research was collected from a wide range of social contexts. From the rich contrast of settings, principles were identified. Many of them were easily recognised.

We see them in action every day. In fact, we use many of these so called strategies ourselves. But we use them unknowingly and naturally.

Its impact

As you can imagine, the commercial world was delighted to read of these secrets. Especially the marketers.

More recently, and perhaps to your surprise, Cialdini has been bought in to consult with the government on policies about Behavioural Change [www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/opensecrets].

Its morality

It seems as if there might be an ethical issue when the two words children and influence are put together. Rightly so.

And yet, we're keenly aware of the negative results when educators fail to influence their pupils. We are paid to succeed at influencing.

REFERENCES

Cialdini, R. B. (2001)
Influence: Science and Practice
Allyn & Bacon, Boston

Reciprocity

We are brought up to repay our debts. Reciprocating is built in. And so it is easy to prompt that response. Simply initiate the giving. Offer someone something— an object or a service— and watch them repay you. Society couldn't run without this dynamic. Use it only for good reasons.

Commitment and consistency

If there's one thing that rules us, it's the need to be consistent. That doesn't mean routine, as in dull or drab. But consistent with the identity we have of ourself. So if we make a commitment, even a small one, we will want to act consistently in line with such an identity. Small commitments shape who we later become.

Social proof

We are social animals and behave like our peers. We may like to think we're special and deeply individual. But the reality is that we don't veer too far from the norm. In fact, we constantly look to see what is normal to direct our own behaviour. So, to influence individuals, make them aware what the majority feel and do.

Authority

Again, we may like to think we're romantic rebels. The reality is otherwise. We search for direction from those we think have status because of their knowledge, power or wisdom. Perhaps educators need to make their own expertise known, in order for it to be more recognised and influential.

Liking

We all like being liked. Nothing wrong with that. Naturally, we also tend to act more pleasantly and favourably towards those we like. As a consequence, liking someone — and making your liking known — will improve your chances of influencing that person.

Scarcity

It's obvious that we value those things that are scarce. And at times this intense desire can affect our behaviour quite severely. Witness the crowds at sales. Or the responses at auctions. So making something scarce will increase its value. Arrange this well and you can influence someone's behaviour.



Our best evidence of what people truly feel and believe comes less from their words than from their deeds.

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A well-known principle of human behavior says that when we ask someone to do us a favor we will be more successful if we provide a reason.

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