



T r a n s b r a n d i n g R e p o r t

» » » for Public Transportation

November/December 2004

How To Be Persuasive in Gaining Support for Transit

Highlights

- People want more of something when they perceive there is less.
- People will more persuaded if they know others agree.
- People say yes to people they like and they like people like them.
- People will tend to agree with credible experts.
- People act consistently with their commitments.
- People feel the need to return a favor.

Coming up

Belynda Johnson, M.S., Managing Director for Majic Consulting Group and nationally recognized speaker and expert in marketing communications, will be the keynote speaker at the Southern California Telecommunications Networking Association in December.

You are often called upon to influence or persuade others. You may have wanted

- To persuade officials to provide needed funding;
- To gain community support for an important public transportation initiative; or

— To influence commuters to try transportation alternatives.

From scientific research on how people are influenced, Dr. Robert Cialdini in his book ***Influence: Science and Practice*** refined six fundamental principles of persuasion. Using these six principals can help you and your agency influence a positive change for public transportation in your community.

1. Create Scarcity.

Research has shown people are more likely to take action on the thought of losing

something than by gaining something of equal value. The



threat of loss creates the idea of scarcity. For example:

Our community stands to lose millions of our federal dollars used to maintain our transportation network, if we do not pass this initiative.

is more effective than

Our community will be eligible for millions of federal dollars to improve our roads and freeways, if we pass this initiative.

2. Demonstrate Consensus.

When people are uncertain, they look at what others have done or are doing. It is important to avoid the tendency to try to mobilize action against an undesirable activity

by depicting it as regrettably frequent. For example, the statement:

The large percentage of citizens who drive single occupant vehicles results in increased traffic congestion and poor air quality in our community.

inadvertently legitimizes the conduct by making it seem normal. A better alternative is

Each person who drives a single occupant vehicle contributes to our traffic congestion and poor air quality in our community.

3. Use Likability.

People like and are influenced by people who are like them. When they are uncertain, they will be more persuaded by people with whom they can identify. Individuals who have not used or supported public transportation will be most responsive to persons who used to be like them but who have changed to support or use transit.

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Majic Consulting Group provides consulting services for the public transportation industry. Our services include

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How To Be Persuasive (continued)

For example, an effective spokesman gains support by honestly saying:

I used to think that public transportation didn't matter, but then I discovered our transit system is a valuable community resource and is important to our quality of life. Now, I'm voting for the transportation tax initiative.

4. Evoke Authority.

People tend to agree with those who are considered to be credible experts. Recommendations are often more readily accepted and funded when they are presented by an outside auditor or expert. For example, it is more persuasive to say

The auditor, who is an expert in FTA funding requirements, recommended increased staffing to handle the reporting requirements necessary to protect our grant monies.

than to just ask for additional staffing to handle the reporting requirements.



5. Solicit Commitment

People are driven to be consistent with their commitments. Studies have found that people are much more likely to accomplish goals if they first state them and the steps for accomplishing them. These results suggest that trial ridership can be substantially enhanced by asking potential riders (a) *whether they will try transit*, (b) *when they plan to do so*, and (c) *where will they go*.

6. Attain Reciprocity.

Nobody wants to appear to be a moocher, ingrate or free-loader! Offering free rides to potential riders on a particular day or for a specific event not only showcases your service, it also encourages support. The power of the *free sample* is that it is also a gift. A gift engages the **reciprocity rule**, which obligates us to pay in kind for what another has provided.

Changing just a few words in your communications using Cialdini's **six principles of persuasion** will greatly improve the likelihood of success. At Majic Consulting, we combine these scientific principles with our real-life experience in public transit to craft messages which enhance the image public transportation.

Could your marketing message be more persuasive?

Majic Consulting Group can help your agency use scientifically tested techniques to get results.