**Powerful Habits of Super Persuasive People**

Whether you’re convincing your boss to fund your project or your preschooler to put his shoes on, persuasion is a skill that's instrumental to your success in life.

Persuasive people have an uncanny ability to get you leaning toward their way of thinking. Their secret weapon is likeability. They get you to like more than their ideas; they get you to like *them.*

Too many people succumb to the mistaken belief that being likeable comes from natural, unteachable traits that belong only to a lucky few—the good looking, the fiercely social, and the incredibly talented. It’s easy to fall prey to this misconception. In reality, being likeable is under your control, and it’s a matter of [emotional intelligence](http://www.talentsmart.com/about/emotional-intelligence.php) (EQ).

In a study conducted at UCLA, subjects rated over 500 adjectives based on their perceived significance to likeability. The top-rated adjectives had nothing to do with being gregarious, intelligent, or attractive (innate characteristics). Instead, the top adjectives were sincerity, transparency, and capacity for understanding (another person).

These adjectives, and others like them, describe people who are skilled in the social side of emotional intelligence. [TalentSmart](http://www.talentsmart.com/) research data from more than a million people shows that people who possess these skills aren’t just highly likeable, they outperform those who don’t by a large margin.

We did some digging to uncover the key behaviors that emotionally intelligent people engage in that make them so persuasive. Here are the tricks of the trade that exceptionally persuasive people use to their advantage:

**They're pleasers.** Persuasive people never win the battle only to lose the war. They know how and when to stand their ground, and yet they are constantly making sacrifices that help their cause. They are always giving in, giving ground, and doing things for other people that make them happy. Persuasive people do this because they know in the long run this wins people over. They know it’s better to be successful than it is to be “right.”

**They aren't pushy.** Persuasive people establish their ideas assertively and confidently, without being aggressive or pushy. Pushy people are a huge turn off. The in-your-face approach starts the recipient backpedaling, and before long, they’re running for the hills. Persuasive people don’t ask for much, and they don’t argue vehemently for their position because they know that subtlety is what wins people over in the long run. If you tend to come across as too aggressive, focus on being confident but calm. Don’t be impatient and overly persistent. Know that if your idea is really a good one, people will catch on if you give them time. If you don’t, they won’t catch on at all.

**They aren't mousy, either.** On the other hand, presenting your ideas as questions or as though they need approval makes them seem flawed and unconvincing. If you tend to be shy, focus on presenting your ideas as statements and interesting facts for the other party to mull over. Also, remove qualifiers from your speech. When you are trying to be persuasive, there is no room for “I think” or “It is possible that.”

**They know their audience.** Persuasive people know their audience inside and out, and they use this knowledge to speak their audience’s language. Whether it’s toning down your assertiveness when talking to someone who is shy or cranking it up for the aggressive, high-energy type, everyone is different, and catching on to these subtleties goes a long way toward getting them to hear your point of view.

**They paint a picture.** Research shows that people are far more likely to be persuaded by something that has visuals that bring it to life. Persuasive people capitalize on this by using powerful visual imagery. When actual images aren’t available or appropriate, these people tell vivid stories that breathe life into their ideas. Good stories create images in the mind of the recipients that are easy to relate to and hard to forget.

**They use positive body language.** Becoming cognizant of your gestures, expressions, and tone of voice (and making certain they’re positive) will engage people and open them up to your arguments. Using an enthusiastic tone, uncrossing your arms, maintaining eye contact, and leaning towards the person who’s speaking are all forms of positive body language that persuasive people use to draw others in. Positive body language will engage your audience and convince them that what you’re saying is valid. When it comes to persuasion, *how* you say something can be more important than *what* you say.

**They smile.** People naturally (and unconsciously) mirror the body language of the person they’re talking to. If you want people to like you and believe in you, smile at them during a conversation, and they will unconsciously return the favor and feel good as a result. Persuasive people smile a lot because they have genuine enthusiasm for their ideas. This has a contagious effect on everyone they encounter.

**They acknowledge your point of view.** An extremely powerful tactic of persuasion is to concede the point. Admit that your argument is not perfect. This shows that you are open minded and willing to make adjustments, instead of stubbornly sticking to your cause. You want your audience to know that you have their best interests at heart. Try using statements such as, “I see where you are coming from,” and “That makes a lot of sense.” This shows that you are actively listening to what they are saying, and you won’t just force your ideas upon them. Persuasive people allow others to be entitled to their opinions and they treat these opinions as valid. They do this because it shows respect, which makes the other person more likely to consider their point of view.

**They ask good questions.** The biggest mistake people make when it comes to listening is failing to hear what’s being said because they are focusing on what they’re going to say next or how what the other person is saying is going to affect them. The words come through loud and clear, but the meaning is lost. A simple way to avoid this is to ask a lot of questions. People like to know you’re listening, and something as simple as a clarification question shows not only that you are listening but also that you care about what they’re saying. You’ll be surprised how much respect and appreciation you gain just by asking questions.

**They use your name.** Your name is an essential part of your identity, and it feels terrific when people use it. Persuasive people make certain they use others’ names every time they see them. You shouldn’t just use someone’s name only when you greet him or her. Research shows that people feel validated when the person they’re speaking with refers to them by name over the course of a conversation.

**They form connections.** People are much more likely to accept what you have to say once they have a sense of what kind of person you are. In a negotiation study, Stanford students were asked to reach agreement in class. Without instruction of any kind, 55% of the students successfully reached agreement. However, when students were instructed to introduce themselves and share their background before attempting to reach agreement, 90% of the students did so successfully. The key here is to avoid getting too caught up in the back and forth of the negotiation. The person you are speaking with is a person, not an opponent or a target. No matter how compelling your argument, if you fail to connect on a personal level, he or she will doubt everything you say.

**They are genuine.** Being genuine and honest is essential to being persuasive. No one likes a fake. People gravitate toward those who are genuine because they know they can trust them. It’s difficult to believe someone when you don’t know who they really are and how they really feel. Persuasive people know who they are. They are confident enough to be comfortable in their own skin. By concentrating on what drives you and makes you happy as an individual, you become a much more interesting and persuasive person than if you attempt to win people over by trying to be the person they want you to be.

**They know when to pull back.** Urgency is a direct threat to persuasion, so tread lightly. When you try to force people to agree instantly, studies show that they are actually more likely to stand by their original opinion. Your impatience causes them to counter your arguments in favor of their own. If your position is strong, you shouldn’t be afraid to back off and give it time to sink in. Good ideas are often difficult to process instantly, and a bit of time can go a long way.

**Bringing It All Together**

Persuasive people are adept at reading and responding to other people. They rely heavily on emotional intelligence (EQ) to bring people to their way of thinking. With 90% of top performers high in emotional intelligence, it’s no wonder that persuasive people rely on this skill to get ahead. Add these skills to your repertoire, and you’re on your way to joining this exclusive group.

*What other habits set persuasive people apart? Please share your insights in the comments section below, as I learn just as much from you as you do from me.*

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:**

Dr. Travis Bradberry is the award-winning co-author of the #1 bestselling book, [*Emotional Intelligence 2.0*](http://www.talentsmart.com/products/emotional-intelligence-2.0/)*,* and the cofounder of [TalentSmart](http://www.talentsmart.com/), the world's leading provider of [emotional intelligence tests](http://www.talentsmart.com/products/) and [training](http://www.talentsmart.com/services/train-the-trainer-certification.php), serving more than 75% of Fortune 500 companies. His bestselling books have been translated into 25 languages and are available in more than 150 countries. Dr. Bradberry has written for, or been covered by, *Newsweek, BusinessWeek, Fortune, Forbes, Fast Company, Inc., USA Today, The Wall Street Journal, The Washington Post*, and *The Harvard Business Review*.