



PART ONE

PLANNING YOUR JOURNEY TO SUCCESSFUL PERSUASION

CHAPTER 1: GET THE MAP OUT

This is where we decide where we are going and we find out where we are now

CHAPTER 2: THE JOURNEY BEGINS

In which we plan, plot, and equip ourselves for success



CHAPTER 1

GET THE MAP OUT

This is where we decide where we are going
and we find out where we are now

“**Y**eah,” you said, picking this book up: “I’d like to be able to persuade people to do stuff and buy stuff and give me stuff!”

But what ‘stuff’? What exactly do you want from this process? If this was a road map, where precisely do you want to get to?

In that brilliant book, *Alice in Wonderland*, Alice is lost and bewildered. Seeing a weird cat up a tree, she decides to ask it for directions (you have to be a bit bewildered to start asking weird cats directions).

“Excuse me, where do I go from here?”

The Cheshire cat (for it is he...) replies:

“It all depends on where you want to get to.”

Alice says,

“I don’t much care where.”

The Cheshire Cat rejoins:

“Then it doesn’t much matter which way you go, then, does it.”

Do You Know Where You are Going?

Look at your map and tell me where exactly on this particular journey you want to get to. Please don't reply with, "Somewhere better than this", or "to get to see the decision maker" or even "more sales".

We need to be a lot clearer in our minds about where we are and where we want to get to if we want to assess how best to get to our destination, the difficulties we are likely to encounter, the time it will take, and the benefits of undertaking the journey in the first place. Vagueness leads to disaster. Retailers have a sort of vague notion that their staff have something to do with the revenue of their business. Ergo, staff could be prevailed upon to help increase the said revenue. Eureka! They need training! Now I do training and, although I say it myself, I feel I'm very good at it.

I have a cat that has the intrinsic intelligence of a tennis ball, but by denying it food I have got it TRAINED to shake hands with me. I will hold out a small piece of cooked meat and this thing will hold out its paw.

"Oh look!" the audience cry, "the kitty is shaking hands with its master."

But, what's the cat thinking?

Is it thinking, "How do you do, master. I'm so sorry that I was unable to join you earlier, but I've just been having a poo in the garden."

Is that what the cat's thinking? I bet its not! The reality is that the cat is thinking nothing at all. Its mind is a complete blank.

The retailer's training regime works on a similar basis. The key is that they train 'how to' not 'why'.

"This is how you greet the customer."

"This is how you present the bag."

"This is how you answer the phone."

But they don't know why they are doing it.

Perhaps you bought this book because you wanted me to show you *how* to persuade. But have you ever considered *why* you should persuade?

Does it matter? Here is a very cruel but funny (so worth doing!) experiment you can try for yourself. Walk into a large high street store, whereupon you will be greeted by a highly trained member of staff.

“Can I help you?”

To which you are supposed to reply, “No thank you, I’m just looking.”

For this experiment, change the script and watch the fireworks.

“Can I help you?”

“With what?”

“Pardon?”

“What did you want to help me with?”

“I don’t know!”

“Then why did you ask me that?”

Total breakdown! “I don’t know why I’m saying it, they make me!”

They literally do not know why they’re doing it.

So is it that important to know why things happen or why you are doing what you are doing? I believe that it certainly is – it is an argument I often have with non-mechanical car drivers. When I push the clutch pedal down, I have a picture in my mind of the moving levers and whirling cog wheels. Most people would say, “I press the pedal and the car goes”, but when one day that fails to happen and you have no understanding of why it failed to happen, you are left stranded until somebody with understanding comes and saves you. This is exactly the same with the persuasion process; you may learn parrot fashion a number of simple ‘how to’ phrases, but if you don’t understand why you are using them, any failure or deviation from the path you expected could mean disaster. To be a great persuader you have to understand all the cogs and wheels and know why you are doing what you are doing and how that fits into the persuasion journey.



THINK ABOUT THIS

Let's look at our map again. Where do you want to get to on this journey?

This is a great exercise for you to do now!

What is it that you are looking for? Are your answers something like this?

- ∩ I would like a better job.
- ∩ I would like a few big customers.
- ∩ I wish my staff were more loyal.
- ∩ It would be great if each customer spent more.

That is too vague – just pick one.

I would like a few big customers. Like who? Acme Metals Ltd.

- ∩ What have you got to offer them?
- ∩ Who do you need to see there?
- ∩ Who is their current supplier?
- ∩ Why aren't you currently doing business with them if they are such a good target? What on earth have you been doing until now?
- ∩ How far away are they from doing business with you?
- ∩ Is your offer sufficiently robust to keep them as a customer for life?

A Wasted Opportunity

Warning! This book will help you to get opportunities. Don't waste them by going off half cocked. Second chances are very much harder to get (but not impossible – although more of that later).

Read this story and tell me what the guy did wrong (clue, it isn't just one thing, either).

Some time ago I was talking to a room full of business start-ups. Persuasion, I told them, was the skill they needed to get their businesses off the ground. At the back there was a guy who clearly wasn't buying in. Finally he spoke out.

"It's alright for you with your silken tongue and subtle ways. OK, I'm convinced, you could persuade anyone!" (Except him, apparently.) "If I could do what you do I would be up and running. Just give me the chance and watch me go!"

"OK," I said, "Let me help you. I'm yours to command! Who would you like me to persuade on your behalf?"

"Er, um," he looked around the room, and then out of the window he spotted a large office block. He became quite agitated and pointed, "Them!" he cried, "I want an appointment with them. I've got an office cleaning business and that is some office. If I could speak to the decision-maker there, all my dreams would come true!"

"Well," I said, "it just so happens that the CEO of that insurance giant is Sir Jack Thomas, a personal friend of mine. So would you like an appointment with him?"

"Oh yes!"

With this, I picked up the phone.

"Acme Insurance. How can I help you?"

"Oh yes, can I speak to Sir Jack please?"

"Who shall I say is calling?"

"Tell him it's his old pal, Geoff!"

A very fruity voice came on the line. "Geoff! How are you? What can I do for you today?"

"I'm very well indeed, thank you, Sir Jack. I would like a bit of a favour from you please."

"Anything, Geoff, just name it!"

"I've got a chap on one of my courses who has an office cleaning business and he would love an appointment with you."

"Of course, Geoff. Any friend of yours is a friend of mine. When would he like to come?"

"Tomorrow? About 3.00 pm?"

"That would be fine. I'll see him then."

The next day at around 3.00 pm there is a knock at Sir Jack's door.

"Come in!"

Our hero appears with his bag of bits held tight, white knuckled to his chest.

"Oh hello, Sir Jack. It's very kind to you to see me at such short notice."

"No. It's a pleasure. Now tell me all about yourself."

"Well, I was made redundant a few weeks ago and with it being so difficult to get a proper job and that, I decided to start this office cleaning business."

"Oh how enterprising. How is it going?"

"OK, I suppose. I could do with more work."

"Yes, of course. Do you have a leaflet or a brochure?"

"I do. My brother-in-law designed it when he was in prison, during his anger management classes!"

"...and such vivid colours... Well, it has been nice to meet you and can I wish you the very best for the future."

At this, the interview is terminated by a warm smile and firm handshake from Sir Jack. Our hero came galloping back full of excitement.

"What a lovely man. The boss of that huge company. He couldn't have been nicer."

"So have you got the contract to do their office cleaning?"

"Er?"

"Why didn't you ask for his cleaning contract?"

“I didn’t want to upset him – he would only have said no.”

“Would he?”

“Of course. The place was spotless; he’s probably got someone a hundred times our size doing the cleaning already.”

What a waste. I called in a huge favour from someone really influential just so that this half-wit could crouch in their office clutching his bag of assorted grubbiness to his chest for absolutely no reason whatsoever. Perhaps after some counselling we could have more success with the next appointment. What next appointment? Why should Sir Jack ever want to see this idiot again? He had one chance and he blew it.

No Second Chances

I know you haven’t read this book yet but at this moment can you see what went wrong?

First, who or what was he going to try and persuade to do what? On our persuasion map that is our destination. Imagine that this book takes away all the hard work, and just by reading it, you will have all the power to persuade anyone to do anything.

The first exercise, setting aside all other things, is who are you going to persuade to do what? Most of us have absolutely no idea. If you are a fan of the self-help gurus, you’ll know that they can sometimes drivel on about positive visualization and goal setting.

“Where do you see yourself in five years time?” they say, and then they get you to picture palm-fringed beaches and private jets. In the world of our similarly disingenuous politicians this is macro-thinking; the big picture, life choices. But I am asking you to go back to the simple basic stuff like, “Do you want custard or ice cream?”

Let me ask you again, who do you want to persuade to do what? Until you have answered that, we have no destination on our map and the journey will not start.

What are You Going to Ask for?

Let's go back to our office cleaner and his first of many mistakes. He has started a small office cleaning company that he feels would do well if it had more customers (right!). He saw a large office; they clearly had a large floor area that would need loads of cleaning (right!). This would be a good job for him to have (why does he think that?). What research has he done to discover that this is a customer he should have? (None). He meets the most important man in the company. That man would most likely be very influential in any decisions the company would make (that is right), so what did he ask for from Sir Jack? (Here's a clue, he asked for absolutely nothing.)

So if you were in his place all because your mouth had got you an appointment with someone you weren't ready to do business with, what are you going to ask for?

Just for the moment forget the big picture, the jets, the palms, and the cuddly sunsets. Let's have a look at the small picture. Let me be your Cheshire cat – where do you want to get to?

Our cleaning chum got very agitated when I expounded this thought process to him.

“OK, what would you ask for?” he cried.

During this book I am going to reveal dark secrets, subtleties and techniques but that's for later. Let's jump in with both feet. Forget subtle – it's bull in a china shop time!

“I came here today, Sir Jack, to ask you to give me the cleaning contract for this building, so can I have the cleaning contract please?”

“Ah ha,” said my man capering around like a loon, “what if he says no?”

“Well”, I said. “What if he says yes?”

“Well, he won't!”

Let's just stop here for a moment. Does our chum – and do you – answer his/our/their own questions? You may as well wake up in the morning, choose all the people you

would like to persuade, answer “no” on their behalf and then roll over and go back to sleep.

Can You Read The Queen’s Mind?

Some time ago I was training a room full of double glazing salespeople. These people were tough, real foot-in-the-door merchants, whose skill was euphemistically called ‘creative selling’. This doesn’t mean that they all wore Breton berets, paint-spattered smocks and weren’t afraid to cry. What it meant was that when running at full throttle they could ‘create’ sales out of thin air. Cold-calling was their thing. They could bang on your door and when you appeared partially dressed with a mouthful of still unchewed dinner, could turn your fury into uncontrollable desire for home improvements. They were all getting a bit smug so I said that when in London I had noticed that Buckingham Palace did seem to have a huge number of windows but none of them seemed to be double glazed. I picked out one of these salespeople and asked what the Queen’s reaction had been when they had cold-called to set up the appointment.

Try this yourself. Imagine you are this person; what is your reaction? What? You haven’t actually asked the Queen? Why not? Stacks of windows to do, plenty of money to pay. Where’s the problem? Now you start to list the problems. “I could never get to speak to the Queen.” “She wouldn’t get involved in stuff like that.” “She probably doesn’t have a phone number.” “I would most likely get locked up in the Tower!” You are predicting trouble and disaster before it happens.

I have to confess that I also wouldn’t try and sell double glazing to the Queen, but I feel that I may use a different kind of reasoning which would include a properly-calculated assessment of the profitability of selling to the Royal Family, the accessibility of the Royal Family, and the value that it would bring to me and my business against the enormous investment in time (actually thinking this

through, perhaps I should go off and sell double glazing to the Queen; “By Royal Appointment” would look very impressive on my headed notepaper). What I am trying to say is, if you decide against a project through careful evidence-based and reasoned argument, that is not the same as not bothering because you are frightened, prejudiced, or have preconceived ideas. The point is, whoever we are dealing with, whether it is the Queen, the Pope, or Sid next door, unless you are genuinely a mind-reader don’t guess the answers to questions you haven’t already put to them simply because their status or your timidity has caused you to presume you know what their reply will be.

If You Want to Know What Someone’s Answer is Going to be, Ask Them The Question. There is No Other Way.

As you may have guessed, I am not a great fan of cheery “sun’ll come up tomorrow” positive thinking and you may find it confusing if you think I’m heading towards the ‘BE POSITIVE’ frame of mind – which has left me with a really big dilemma. What I am trying to say is, don’t be negative. Perhaps cold and calculating would be better – just put away that cheery smile and the tambourine and *THINK THIS THING THROUGH.*

This persuasion thing is a game, a game of strategy, objectives and tactics. Just like chess – up against a Grand Master? “Then he’ll wup your arse!” That is a fairly negative prediction of the outcome. Up against a Grand Master? A cheery whistle, a firm handshake and true self-belief will win me every game! The idiot’s view. Up against a Grand Master? Maybe he will go for the Molotov-mate, the Perkins Gambit is one of his options. A solid defence and unexpected attack would give me a chance. Knowing this guy’s game, he is very strong but does have weakness in the back rank and always castles out of habit. Now that is anticipation.

GET THE MAP OUT

Prediction is something you do with crystal balls, runes and frogs' entrails. Anticipation is done with knowledge, care, and planning. The essence of this chapter is about knowing where you are going, why you are going there, and how to draw a clearly defined map and plan of how you are going to do it.

POINTS TO PONDER ON CHAPTER 1

1. You cannot plan a journey if you have no idea where you are going.
2. It is very nice to know *how* to do things but not much use if you don't know *why* you are doing them.
3. If your wish-list is too long and too vague, none of your wishes will come true. Remember, even the best genies only give three wishes.
4. Pick a target and make a list of things that stand between you and victory.
5. If hard work or good luck grants you an opportunity, don't waste it; make sure you know precisely how you are going to use this opportunity.
6. Don't answer other peoples' questions in your mind – the only way to get answers is to ask questions face to face.
7. Anticipate, don't predict.
8. Anticipate, don't assume.