

BRAND STRATEGY**THE ART OF INFLUENCE**

Guy Kawasaki | Garage Technology Ventures | March 24th, 2009

There are few more useful books for understanding sales and marketing than Influence— Science and Practice (Allyn & Bacon, 2000) by Robert Cialdini. In this book, he outlines the six key principles of influencing people. As you build your brand, keep them in mind:

- 1. Reciprocation.** When you receive something from someone, all but the most socially inept feel an obligation to give something back. This isn't limited to gifts and goods; it also includes treatment. If someone treats you with kindness, you are likely to treat them back in the same way. Example: Charities giving gifts when asking for donations.
- 2. Scarcity.** When people perceive something as popular and in short supply, they will seize the opportunity to possess it. This explains the potency of limited time and limited quantity offers when there's little reason for limits of either. Example: the "limited" number of people could sign up for Google's [Gmail](#).
- 3. Authority.** You can persuade people if they perceive you as having knowledge and credibility about a subject. This effect includes not only celebrity endorsements but the reliance of people in a social circle to believe the group's "experts." Example: I know this is ridiculous, but [Dennis Haysbert](#) is effective at selling Allstate Insurance because he's The Man in "[The Unit](#)."
- 4. Commitment.** If you can get someone to commit to an order or request, she is likely to go through with the commitment. This is especially true if you sign a pledge document or publicly declare your intentions. Example: Signing a petition to support a cause.
- 5. Liking.** The more people know you and like you, the more likely you can influence them. While people you dislike may bludgeon you into doing something, it's certainly not "influence" in the way that we're discussing it. Example: my daughter asking me for anything anytime anywhere.
- 6. Consensus.** If everyone around you is buying a product, you'll be more likely to buy it, too. Doesn't food taste better at restaurants with long lines? In many instances, saving time and thinking is a benefit of following the wisdom of the crowd. Example: the lines of people waiting to get a new model iPhone.

This is not to say that you should guilt people into buying something that is artificially constrained in quantity from a pseudo-likable person feigning expertise by making them publicly commit to what your confederates are buying too because such deception will catch up to you. However, you should know that when these conditions are sincere and true, they are highly effective ways to influence your customers.

Also, understand that you are susceptible to these forces, so that you can resist them better. Then you'll be a superior marketer and a superior consumer too. If you'd like to read more about the social psychology, check out [Psychology.Alltop](#).