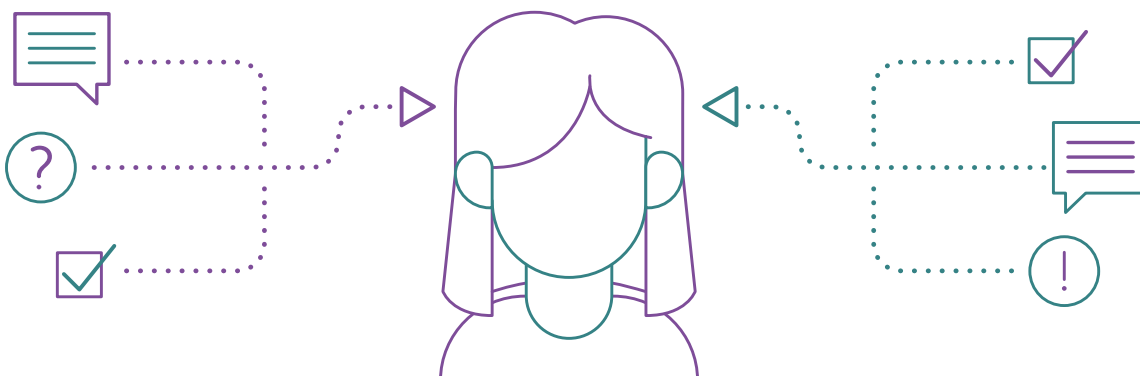


# A guide on Using Persuasion for Social Good.

Changing someone's mind can be considered quite a difficult feat, particularly if they're entrenched in their particular way of thinking.

As behaviour change experts, however, we work on a daily basis to encourage and persuade people to make changes in their everyday lives to benefit both themselves and wider communities, and thus work towards the wider social good. A good social marketing campaign does just this, through employing a range of techniques to appeal to the target audiences and use messages which will resonate with them and lead them to change their behaviours.



Taking a step back, a social marketing campaign has one purpose; to persuade. It needs to convince audiences that they should change their everyday habits and behaviours in order to benefit themselves, their communities and work towards the wider 'social good'. For example, encouraging people to recycle more in order to benefit the environment, and thus create a sustainable future.

After careful study of persuasion in effect, psychologist Prof. Robert Cialdini produced **six principles of persuasion** which, when used effectively, can maximise the likelihood of producing changes in behaviour.

## The Six Principles of Persuasion

The six principles of persuasion can be easily remembered through the acronym 'RASCLS'. They are key in the successful persuasion of individuals and can actually be utilised to maximise the effectiveness of social marketing campaigns; this provides an opportunity for them to be used for 'social good'. Below, we have outlined **what each principle is**, and how it can be used to promote behaviour change for the 'social good'.

### **R** | RECIPROCITY

This principle refers to the obligation to repay what is given – 'tit for tat'. So, if an individual does something for the benefit of another, the other person feels obligated to do or give something in return.

Reciprocity can be used to work towards social good by highlighting the positive result of change, such as benefits to them or others, or by using a reward system to encourage people to engage in certain behaviours, e.g. a free hot drink of their choice if they use a reusable travel mug five times. This promise of reward makes people more inclined to execute a particular behaviour to the best of their ability so that they are worthy of the reward, which can in turn work towards the wider social good. For example, getting people to use a reusable travel mug reduces their paper waste, thus contributing towards the reduction in overall waste and harm to the environment.

# A | AUTHORITY

People in positions of authority in society, such as people in uniform or athletes, are more persuasive. The way people dress and present themselves is important, as it contributes to the 'halo effect', which is when the impression an individual forms of a person in one area (such as being well dressed) influences their impression of them in another area (such as considering them to be the experts in their field and therefore trustworthy).

In a social marketing campaign, audiences are more likely to listen to people of influence to them and in the given topic area. For example, health experts dressed in their work uniform would be more likely to discourage smoking and drinking behaviours than a stranger dressed in casual clothing.

However, the chosen messenger for some campaigns would depend on the audience, as different demographics would consider different people to be 'authority figures'. For example, children and young people would most likely consider a teacher to have more authority over someone dressed in a suit and would therefore be more likely to change their behaviour if told to do so by a teacher.

# S | SCARCITY

When the availability of something is high, it has a lower value. However, when its availability is low, it becomes more attractive and therefore more valuable. Online retail often uses this technique by claiming that a particular product has 'LOW STOCK', even if more will soon be available. This creates the illusion that the product is scarce and will soon be unavailable, which not only makes it seem more desirable but also encourages people to make a purchase.

This technique is probably the most difficult to apply to making behaviour change happen and working towards the wider social good. However, by labelling the new behaviour as one which is rarely executed but can contribute towards real, positive change when carried out by a large number of people, it creates the idea that this behaviour needs to be engaged with as soon as

possible. Showing the behaviour as rare but necessary can thus encourage people to make changes more urgently. For example, when the harms of plastic straws to marine life were highlighted, there was an emphasis on how few people actually use alternative material straws, highlighting the scale and urgency to which change was needed – and change is exactly what happened. Paper straws quickly replaced plastic straws and are now seen in many bars and restaurants, which is complimented by a culture shift amongst young people to use metal straws in everyday life.

## **C** | **COMMITMENT AND CONSISTENCY**

People like to make decisions which are consistent with their self-image and beliefs, and do not like to change their mind. This may make behaviour change difficult if the behaviour change itself is not something they agree with.

However, if their current behaviour is framed in a previous context where that behaviour would be appropriate and the new situation is then explained, then that gives people the freedom to change their behaviour in a way that would allow them to remain true to their self-image. For example, if trying to get people to appropriately separate their waste and recycle, intervention options could be framed to say: “You’ve said that you rarely recycle because you find it difficult to distinguish what waste goes in what bin. If we were to provide you with a clear guide and labelling system for what goes in what bin, would that make it easier for you? Would you then be more likely to recycle?”

Through using this method, the individual can make changes to their behaviour without going against their beliefs. They didn’t recycle before because it was difficult to separate their waste, but now it has been made easier, they would no longer have the belief that it is difficult. Changing their behaviour to recycle more would therefore seem more feasible as it would be in-line with their new belief that recycling is easier than they thought.

## L LIKEABILITY

People are influenced by those who are similar to them and those they like. Even similar names, such as Danielle and Daniel, can make someone more influential. This means a particular person of influence to one audience may not have the same impact on other audiences. This is a similar concept to the 'Authority' principle.

Social marketing campaigns promoting the 'social good' can therefore obtain their audience's buy-in through using someone of influence to convey the message. This person of influence should be someone who the audience finds to be relatable and likeable. For example, a campaign encouraging young people to pick up their litter may use a prominent social media figure who can use their influence to encourage a large following to engage in this behaviour. Alternatively, a campaign trying to encourage more mothers to breastfeed would benefit from using a real mother, or online mumsnet forums, to convey information and messages of support so that the audience better identifies with the messenger and are more likely to follow in changes to behaviour.

## S | SOCIAL PROOF

People make decisions based on experiences and behaviours of others. For example, people are more likely to buy a product which has positive reviews from others, particularly those who are considered to be similar to them.

The best way to utilise this principle is through the use of case studies and testimonials of others who have made the changes outlined by the social marketing campaign. This way, audiences can see the actual change in effect rather than relying on the word of the campaign. For example, case studies could be obtained from people who quit smoking which detail every step of the process, i.e. realising they needed to quit, finding support to quit, their journey of quitting and how they feel after so many months smoke-free. By providing the audience with this story, they are able to relate to the campaign and believe that changing their behaviour is possible and can lead to a range of health benefits. This in turn increases the likelihood that they would be motivated to engage with the quitting behaviours.

## Conclusion.

These six principles can be key in making a social marketing campaign successful. If there is an adequate level of knowledge and understanding of the audience in question, any one of these principles can be used to persuade people to change their behaviour and thus work towards the wider social good.

**We only work with organisations that want to bring about positive social change, and people who want to do good. We think this is you... Let's talk.**



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