

# The Science of Persuasion: Six Basic Laws

*Persuasion is an important element of personal selling process*

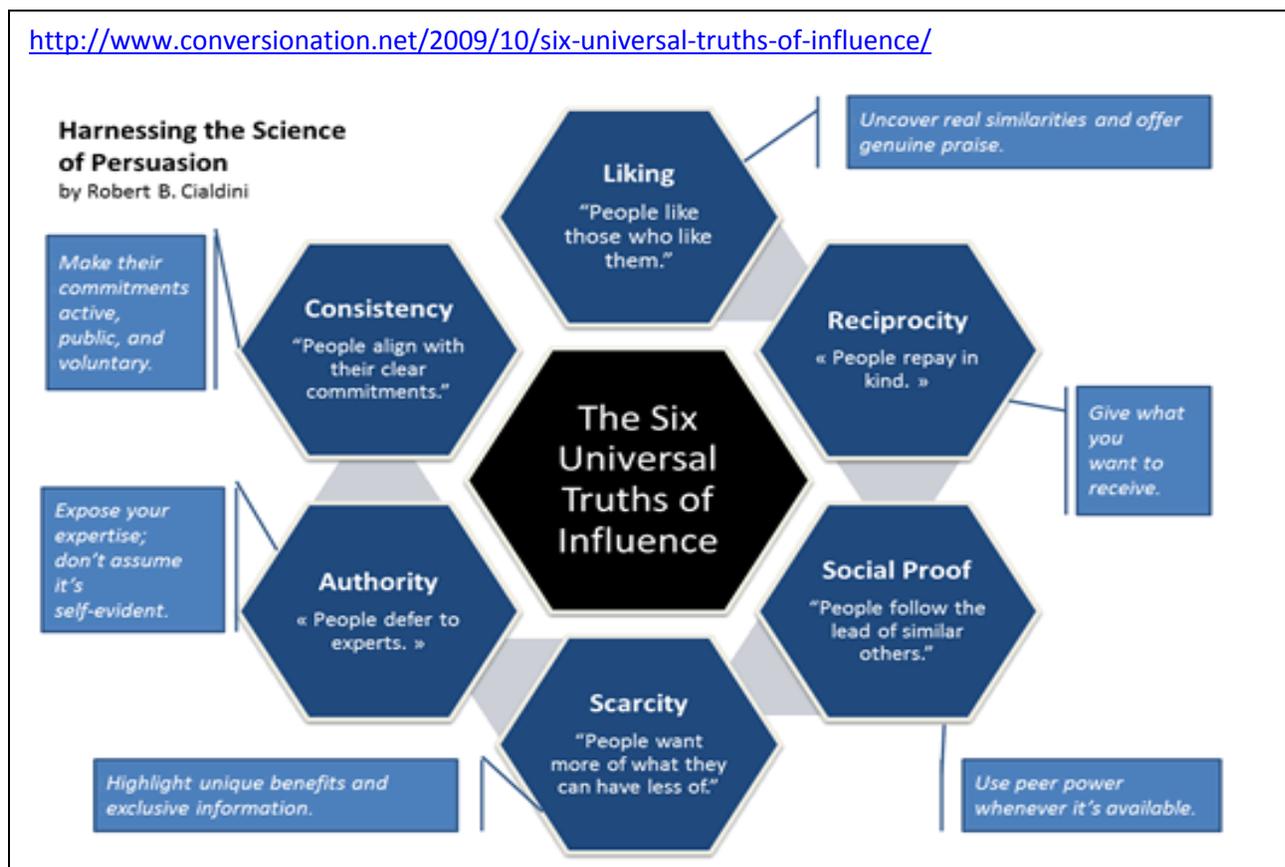
No personal selling is successful without mastering the scientific laws behind the art of 'persuasion'. The psychological research suggests that there are six basic laws behind the art of persuasion to influence customers, friends, and winning people in the personal selling process.

## 1. The Principle of Liking: *People like those who like them*

- Tupperware applies *the principle of liking* while hosting demonstration party for its products. Independent sales force, always a woman, who invites friends, neighbors, and relatives to the demonstration parties. The guests at demonstration party buy products not just because they like the products but also to please their hostess as well because they like the hostess.

**Personal selling process** generally consists of seven stages such as 1. Prospecting and evaluating, 2. Pre-approach, 3. Approach, 4. Presentation, 5. Handling objections, 6. Closing, and 7. Follow-up. The stages may differ from one sales person to another and with different situations.

- **Application:** *Uncover real similarities and offer genuine praise* – prospects are more positive to buy an insurance policy from a salesman who is similar to them in age, culture, politics, even in habits like cigarette-smoking



## 2. The Principle of Reciprocity: *People repay in kind*

- Purchasing managers display willingness to purchase raw material from suppliers who have showered gifts on them at various occasions.
- **Application:** *Give what you want to receive* – Managers can elicit the desired behavior from employees by being first an example to them in terms of either a sense of trust or a spirit of cooperation or a pleasant demeanor

## 3. The Principle of Social Proof: *People follow the lead of similar others*

- Persuasion is more effective if it comes from peers. Testimonials from satisfied customers are more influential when the both satisfied customer and prospective customer share similar context
- **Application:** *Use peer power whenever it's available* – Influence is more positive if exerted horizontally rather than vertically

## 4. The Principle of Consistency: *People align with their clear commitments*

- An active choice of people who have spoken out loud or written down or made it explicit fulfill their commitment
- **Application:** *make people commitments active, public, and voluntary* – Written statements turns into more powerful if they are made public. Commitments must be voluntary to be effective and lasting

## 5. The Principle of Authority: *People defer to experts*

- People opinion gets changed dramatically if acknowledged by an expert on news media. A single news item by an expert in the *New York Times* is able to shift 2% of public opinion nationwide.
- **Application:** Stroke patients started following physiotherapists' advice when they displayed their awards, diplomas and other certification on the walls of the therapy rooms. Exercise compliance rate jumped to 34% since then and never dropped after.

## 6. The Principle of Scarcity: *People want more of what they can have less of*

- Exclusive information is more persuasive than widely available data. Customers doubled their orders when told that due to certain weather conditions, there is a possibility of scarcity of foreign beef in the near future. Customers' orders got increased 600% when they were told that no one else had that information yet.
- **Application:** The persuasive power of exclusivity can be used by any manager who has the information that is not widely available and that supports an idea or initiative he or she would like the organization to implement.

Topic	Course
Personal selling process: Personal selling and sales force management: Unit 21.5	Marketing management

**Sources:**

- <http://hbr.org/2001/10/harnessing-the-science-of-persuasion/ar/1>
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- Cialdini, R.B., *Harnessing the Science of Persuasion*, Harvard Business Review, October 2001.