MODULE
Communication

LESSON
Learning How to be Persuasive: Using Passion and Past Performance to Make Your Case Part 1
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Overview

Purpose

To teach students the importance of being a persuasive communicator in the workplace and in life.

National Career Development Standards

**Standard 1:** Understanding the influence of a positive self-concept.

**Standard 2:** Skills to interact positively with others.

**Standard 5:** Understanding the need for positive attitudes toward work and learning.

National Career Development Benchmarks

Students will be able to . . .

**Benchmark 1.** a. Demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between personal behavior and self-concept.

**Benchmark 2.** b. Demonstrate interpersonal skills required for working with and for others.

**Benchmark 2.** d. Demonstrate how to express feelings, reactions, and ideas in an appropriate manner.

**Benchmark 5.** e. Demonstrate positive work attitudes and behaviors.

Think and Discuss

1. *List and describe the steps to being a persuasive communicator.*

2. *Why is it important to be persuasive in the workplace?*
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Teacher Preparation

Class Materials

Copy the following exercises for distribution to students

- Exercise 1: *Learning How to Be Persuasive Pre-Quiz*
- Exercise 2: *Quote and Anecdote of the Day*
- Exercise 4: *Sell Me this Pen! (1 copy of each of the 3 skits)*
- Exercise 5: *Persuasive Behavior Techniques*

Overhead templates for teacher use

- Exercise 1: *Learning How to Be Persuasive Pre-Quiz*
- Exercise 2: *Quote and Anecdote of the Day*

Key Words

1. Persuasive Communicator
2. Passion
3. Tantrum
4. Tactics
5. Confidence
Exercise 1: Pre-Quiz Directions & Answer Key

Teacher Directions

*This exercise should take 5 minutes with some discussion after each question. A teacher copy is provided with the answers.*

**Step 1:** Have students take the 6-question “Persuasion” quiz to check for understanding.

**Step 2:** Review the questions with students to correct misconceptions they may have that relate to being a persuasive communicator.

**Step 3:** Transition to Exercise 2: “Quote and Anecdote of the Day.”

Answer Key

1. C
2. True
3. E
4. E
5. E
6. D
**Exercise 1: Learning How to Be Persuasive Pre-Quiz**

1. Being persuasive means:
   a. Forcing someone to do something your way
   b. Having a temper tantrum if somebody doesn’t agree with you
   c. Convincing someone, with skill and tact, to see things your way
   d. Crying until someone feels sorry for you and gives you your way
   e. None of the above

2. A good communicator is usually a good persuader.
   TRUE
   FALSE

3. Which best identifies an example of good persuasion?
   a. Presenting the benefits the other person will get by seeing things your way
   b. Discussing the pros and cons of your idea, but focusing more on the pros
   c. Selling your idea to many people instead of just one person
   d. Building relationships with the people whom you want to accept your idea
   e. All of the above

4. Which obstacles would make being persuasive a difficult task?
   a. Not building relations with the people you need to persuade
   b. Not believing in yourself and your ideas while you persuade
   c. Not understanding what motivates the people you are trying to persuade
   d. Not describing the benefits that will be gained by the people you persuade
   e. All of the above

5. Fill in the blank. A bad persuader is someone who __________.
   a. Speaks clearly and defines his/her message
   b. Doesn’t research the background of the person he/she must persuade
   c. Lacks confidence
   d. Is a bad salesperson
   e. B, C, & D

6. If you are an effective persuader, what positive things might happen to you?
   a. You will become rich and famous
   b. Everyone will love you
   c. Your supervisor will treat you like a Rock Star
   d. Your job will be much easier and your time will be more effective
   e. All of the above
   f. None of the above
Exercise 2: Quote and Anecdote of the Day

Teacher Directions

You may want to write the quote on the board to focus your students’ thoughts on “Persuasive Communication in the Workplace.” Process the quote and anecdote with your students to check for understanding. This exercise should take 5 minutes with some discussion.

Step 1: Have selected students read the quote and anecdote aloud. Ask all of the students the following questions:

- Hoe does the quote relate to persuasive communication in the workplace?
- In the anecdote, what is the basic recipe for workplace persuasion?
- Site some examples of when you would use this persuasion recipe in the workplace.

Quote

“There is only one way to get anybody to do anything – and that is by making the other person want to do it.”

- Dale Carnegie

Anecdote

Visionaries – people who see their jobs changing and evolving months and years before they actually do – often have to learn how to be persuasive in order to make their visions of growth or improvement happen. Likewise, people who are simply asking for a raise or a promotion also have to be effective persuaders. Have you ever gotten a phone call from a telemarketer? His/her JOB is to persuade you to buy whatever it is that’s being sold that day. Some persuasion tactics are direct while other tactics, like a TV advertisement, are indirect.

There is a basic recipe for effective persuasion, and I will give you the ingredients. The lessons below will help you sharpen your skills in developing and using the individual ingredients, but how you mix them all together is up to you. Here are the essential ingredients to becoming an effective persuader:

1. **Have confidence** in yourself. Be strong of mind and strong of will, but not arrogant.

2. **Believe** in what you are trying to persuade others to do or believe. If you don’t believe in it, there is no way anyone else ever will.

3. **Do research** and learn about the person or people you will have to persuade. Meet with them individually and ask questions related to your idea, but don’t let them know what you are really doing. This tactic is called “recon” work (short for “reconnaissance”). Fact-finding and data gathering about the people you must persuade will help you learn about who your opponents will be and what their arguments against you might be. This is also important because you have to know if you are persuading the right people. Don’t waste your time with people you know are not supposed to be involved or who won’t have an interest in what you are proposing.
4. **Communicate** clearly and concisely. Get to the point. Long-winded persuasion sessions only bore and confuse people. Be sure to explain your idea very clearly. If your audience doesn’t understand where you are coming from, they will never be persuaded that it is a good thing or the right thing to do.

5. **Demonstrate the benefits** of seeing things your way. There always has to be something in it for the people you are trying to persuade. Maybe they can make extra money, save time, learn a new skill, meet new people, or leave work earlier. Whatever the benefits, be sure to let them know up front!

6. **Motivate** and support the people you are trying to persuade with a positive and friendly attitude. Show enthusiasm and excitement. People will follow you if you are excited and enthusiastic. If you are tired and bored and not animated about your idea, why should they be?

Persuasion is a tough skill to master, especially if you have to talk to a non-believer. It takes lots of practice, but you will find that the stronger your passion, the easier it will be for you to persuade others.

- *A corporate manager*

Teacher Directions

*Play the video titled “Persuasive Communicator.” Discussion should follow after the video vignette. This exercise should take 5 minutes to discuss.*

**Step 1:** Review the video vignette before introducing the video to your class.

**Step 2:** Show the video and discuss with your class the message provided in the video.

**Step 3:** Transition to Exercise 4: “Sell Me this Pen!”
Exercise 4: Sell Me this Pen!

Teacher Directions

Please review the exercise before proceeding. This exercise should take 15 minutes to complete.

Step 1: Ask the students to sit in a large circle, either on the floor or in their seats.

Step 2: Ask 3 students to volunteer as “Pen Salespersons.” All 3 salespeople will have a different pitch to give to the rest of the students. Each salesperson will read his/her sales pitch to the group and then wait for the group’s response. (All salespeople are to try to sell the same pen, ballpoint, felt tip, permanent marker, or whatever.)

Step 3: At the end of each sales pitch, ask the class if they were persuaded to purchase the pen. Use the questions following each “pitch” to assess for understanding.

Step 4: Transition to Exercise 5: “How to Persuade with Speech”.
Sell Me this Pen!

SKIT 1: ALL HYPE AND NO HELP

(Sales person #1 reads from this script)

(in your best infomercial voice!) “Hello. My name is ____________, and I am here today to tell you about a wonderful opportunity that will only come your way once in a lifetime!”

“I want to give you a chance to get in at the ground floor of a wonderful writing experience.”

“This pen (hold it up over your head) is the greatest pen in the world! It will satisfy all of your writing needs and will bring you years of writing enjoyment!”

“This really is the world’s greatest pen. Even the Queen of England has one!”

“So how many of you want to buy one of these beauties right now?”

END OF SKIT

MAJOR LESSON: Selling the sizzle and not the steak doesn’t always work. People can see right through the baloney you are trying to hand them.

Questions for Review:

1. How persuasive was the speaker? Did anyone want to purchase a pen based on his/her speech? Why or why not?

2. Based on what you’ve learned so far about being persuasive, what mistakes did the speaker make in his/her speech?

POSSIBLE ANSWERS:

- Didn’t get to know the group by asking “pen” related questions.
- Didn’t let them get to know him/her to feel comfortable or connected.
- Didn’t reveal any benefits of using or owning the pen.
- Didn’t motivate them to purchase the pen, just used hype and hollow buzz words like, “the best” and “worlds greatest.”
SKIT 2: LACK OF CONFIDENCE

(Sales person #2 reads from this script)

(meekly) “Hello. Do you want to buy a pen? I have lots of pens to sell.”

“I just need someone to buy one pen. Anybody?”

“Please buy my pens. They are nice pens. They write on paper. They are blue.”

“If I sell 10 pens, I get $10 dollars, and I can buy my cat some cat food. She’s a hungry cat. Please buy my pens.”

END OF SKIT

MAJOR LESSON: Pity sometimes helps the less fortunate tug at the heartstrings of people who can help, but in the workplace it NEVER works. If you lack confidence, no one will ever let you persuade him/her to do anything.

Questions for Review:

1. How persuasive was the speaker? Did anyone want to purchase a pen based on his/her speech? Why or why not?

2. Based on what you’ve learned so far about being persuasive, what mistakes did the speaker make in his/her speech?

POSSIBLE ANSWERS:

- Didn’t give his/her name.
- Didn’t connect with the group.
- Didn’t describe the pens beyond the color and that they write on paper.
- Didn’t motivate the group – they were told of no benefits to buying the pens.
- Made the sale of the pens all about the salesperson. He/she could buy cat food if the group bought pens.
SKIT 3: NOW WE’RE GETTING SOMEWHERE!

(Sales person #3 reads from this script)

(enthusiastically, but not cheesy) “HI EVERYONE!

(pause) I can’t hear you! I said ‘HI EVERYONE!’ ” (wait for response while making eye contact with audience members)

“My name is ________, and it is nice to be here with you today.”

“I’d like to know something: How many of you use pens in class or for homework? If you do, please raise your hands.”

“Lots of people use pens, but they usually just buy any old pen because they think all pens are the same. Is that pretty much true with you?”

“If I were to tell you that you could have a state-of-the-art pen, for the same cost that you pay for your average old pen, you would want to learn more about it, right? After all, you don’t want to throw your money away on average pens, do you?”

“Look at this beauty.” (show the pen) “This pen is engineered to give you a comfortable grip.”

“You, sir/ma’am, would you please come up here and give it a feel?” (hold the pen out to someone from the group to come up and test.) “Feels nice, doesn’t it?! Thanks for your help; please take your seat.”

“The other benefit to using this pen is that the ink flows smoothly – like a skater on ice.”

“You, sir/ma’am, would you please come up here and see how it writes?” (point to someone else from the group to come up and write on a sheet of paper) “See how smooth that feels? That will help you write more in less time.”

“That’s all the time I have for today, but I want to leave you with a quick reminder: This pen costs THE SAME as any other pen you will find in any store, but remember that this pen will provide comfort and smooth writing, AND it has 50% more ink than ordinary pens! I will stick around after class so you can ask me additional questions or use the pen. It was great meeting you!!”

END OF SKIT
MAJOR LESSONS: Salesperson #3 tried to build rapport with the group. The group was answering questions and getting involved in the presentation. Remember, having a connection with the people or person you are trying to persuade is critical. Secondly, the benefits to the group were finally presented. The people being persuaded always must know what’s in it for them. This time, the salesperson let them know exactly how their writing experience would be better if they used this pen. The salesperson even let the group experience the product before asking them to purchase it.

Questions for Review:

1. How persuasive was the speaker? Did anyone want to purchase a pen based on his/her speech? Why or why not?

2. Based on what you’ve learned so far about being persuasive, what mistakes did the speaker make in his/her speech?

POSSIBLE ANSWERS:
- Came across too strongly as a salesperson, but that was his/her job for this skit.
- When you are persuading someone in the workplace, think of the concepts involved with selling, but don’t act or talk like you are trying to make a sale!
Exercise 5: How to Persuade with Speech

Teacher Directions

*Please review this exercise before presenting the topic to the class. This exercise should take 20 minutes to complete.*

*Teacher Note: In this exercise, you should help the students identify which PERSUASIVE behavior technique is most effective and which elements are not as effective. Please ask students to volunteer to read the scenarios out loud and answer the questions with the entire class at the INTERMISSIONS.*

**Step 1:** Select students to read the scenarios in front of the class.

**Step 2:** Use the questions provided at the INTERMISSIONS to assess the students’ understanding of the topic.

**Step 3:** Transition to Exercise 6: “Persuasive Communicator Self-Assessment.”
Persuasive Behavior Techniques - Scenario A:

(Find 2 volunteers to read aloud to the class.)

**BOSS:** Fred, I need you to file this stack of medical reports right now!

**FRED:** OK.

**INTERMISSION**

Questions for Review:

1. Is Boss using persuasive communication?
2. Why or why not?

**BACK TO SCENARIO A:**

**FRED:** (Thinking to himself). I don’t want to do this stuff. Why can’t he leave me alone?

**FRED:** (out loud) Boss, is there a chance I could ask Tyson to help me with this? I have to finish your report, and I want to make sure I have it done perfectly for you. You do have to give it to the Vice President of Human Resources this afternoon, don’t you?

**BOSS:** You’re right. Get that report in top shape, and I will just take these to Tyson myself.

**INTERMISSION**

Questions for Review:

1. At the beginning, did you think Fred would file just because the boss was able to persuade through “power”?
2. Was Fred’s motivation to persuade genuine or was he just trying to get out of something negative?
3. What did Fred do to persuade his boss to think differently about his filing assignment?
4. What specifically did Fred say that motivated his boss to become persuaded with Fred’s idea?
PROCESSING SCENARIO A:

Effective Persuader Behavior #1: OUTLINING THE BENEFITS.

Whenever you try to persuade anyone to do anything, you have to convince him/her that he/she actually wants to do it! It sounds like the old Jedi Mind Trick from Star Wars®, but it isn’t. Fred simply stated the benefits Boss would enjoy if Boss let Fred finish the report and not distract him with the filing project. One of the motivators that helped Boss become persuaded was the fact that the VP of HR was going to review the report that afternoon. Which brings us to the second part of this lesson.

Effective Persuader Behavior #2: POLITICS IS A TREMENDOUS PERSUADER.

If it wasn’t for the report that was due, Boss was going to use his/her political power to persuade Fred to do the filing. On the flip side, Fred reminded Boss about the VP of HR’s political power and used that to persuade Boss to take the filing project to Tyson. Always remember how powerful politics can be in persuading others to get a job done!!

AD-LIB the ALTER-ENDING: Ask a student to ad-lib (play it out off the top of his/her head) the rest of “SCENARIO A” with the questions below as a guideline for his/her acting:

What do you suppose would have happened to Fred if he had decided not to mention the political issue involving the VP of HR? What if he just said, “I have a lot of work to do here. I don’t have time to file.” How would SCENARIO A have unfolded then?

Feel free to ask more than one student to ad-lib the alter-ending to “SCENARIO A” if they have more ideas.

Persuasive Behavior Techniques - Scenario B:

(Find 3 more volunteers to read aloud to the class.)

JULIA: (to Lisa) I have to make a presentation to the Finance Department about my ideas to grow our business. Do you have any ideas that would help?

LISA: Yes. Find out who will be in that presentation. Once you know that, make an appointment to meet with the 2 most senior people and have a meeting with both of them in order to learn about their position on your ideas before you present to the group.

JULIA: Great idea! Thanks! (leaves and returns shortly)
JULIA: Lisa, I found out that there will be 18 people in my presentation. All of them will be from the Finance Department, but the 2 most senior people are Hector and Sonia. I am going to meet with them and ask them some questions.

LISA: Good luck! Let me know if I can help when you get back.

JULIA: (Calls Hector on the phone) Hello, Hector. This is Julia from Marketing. As you know, you will be attending my presentation next week. In that presentation, I will discuss why I think my marketing program needs some additional funds for growth. Is it possible for us to have a 30-minute meeting before the presentation next week? It is? Great! See you then!

(later, Julia meets with Hector)

HECTOR: Now, Julia, I allowed you to have this short meeting with me today – but I have to tell you that I will not give you an answer now. I must listen to your presentation first. If you are here to try to convince me of anything right now, you are sadly mistaken.

INTERMISSION

Questions for Review:

1. Has Julia demonstrated any persuasive communication thus far? In what way?
2. In what ways could she have been more persuasive?
3. At this point, is Julia doing the right things? Why or why not?
4. Would you be handling this situation any differently?

BACK TO SCENARIO B:

JULIA: I understand your concern. That is not why I am here. In order for us to maximize our time in the presentation, I wanted to ask you a few questions about your vision for the growth of the marketing program. I really want to listen to your ideas, your concerns, and your visions as to how the growth of the marketing program will benefit our company.

HECTOR: Of course! Here is what I am thinking: (he gives Julia his ideas)

JULIA: You certainly have given this some thought. I liked your ideas, and I understand your concerns. This gives me much to think about and consider. I was going to meet with Sonia and have a similar discussion with her. Do you think that is a good idea?

HECTOR: In my opinion, I would say it is a smart move. She is a brilliant woman.
JULIA: OK. I will call her. Thanks again for your help and guidance! I will see you in the presentation next week! (returns to her office where she meets Lisa)

JULIA: Lisa, I had the most incredible meeting. Hector gave me insights that I never would have thought of. My presentation is way off base. I have to make changes so they tie into his line of thinking. We have common ground on our thoughts and plans, but I really need to highlight them. Can you help me rework my presentation after I meet with Sonia?

LISA: You bet, if you are able to grow our Marketing Department, I will benefit too, because I am the Assistant Director of Marketing Communications, you know!

INTERMISSION

Questions for Review:

1. Did the fact that Julia met with Hector help build a rapport with him? Why or why not?
2. Do you think Hector’s information, if used in the presentation next week, will help persuade Hector to agree with Julia’s plans?
3. What does this tell you about building rapport and gathering information before you try to persuade someone?

PROCESSING SCENARIO B:

Effective Persuader Behavior #3: FACT-FIND AND GATHER DATA.

When Hector and Sonia listen to Julia’s presentation, they will hear a very familiar and comforting persuasive speech. Julia is combining her ideas with the ideas of the most powerful people in the audience. If she can persuade them, the rest of the group will likely follow. Fact-finding and utilizing those facts is a very powerful persuasion tool. Make sure your know your audience and what they will want to hear. Make sure you build rapport with as many of the “persuadees” as you can before you ask them to adopt your ideas. That way, you will have the ultimate persuasion tool: knowledge about their wants, needs, and expectations.

AD-LIB the ALTER-ENDING: Ask a student to ad-lib the rest of “SCENARIO B” with the questions below as a guideline for his/her acting:

What do you suppose would have happened to Julia if she had simply tried to persuade everyone in the presentation without having met with Hector and Sonia? What could have been a potential outcome of the presentation? How might the group react? How might Hector and Sonia react if this was the first time they heard Julia’s persuasive pitch?

Feel free to ask more than one student to ad-lib the alter-ending to “SCENARIO B” if they have more ideas.
Persuasive Behavior Techniques - Scenario C:

(Find 2 more volunteers to read aloud to the class.)

SHAWNA: Boss, I need a raise.

SUPERVISOR: You know I can’t give you a raise. You’ve only been here 6 months.

SHAWNA: Yes, but I make less than the other receptionists.

SUPERVISOR: That’s not true, and it isn’t a good reason to ask for a raise.

INTERMISSION

Questions for Review:

1. Is Shawna’s argument persuasive at this point?
2. Why or why not?
3. What could she say or do to be more persuasive?

BACK TO SCENARIO C:

SHAWNA: OK. I have other reasons. I created this document. It's called a “WIDAR.” It stands for “Why I Deserve A Raise.” It lists all of my accomplishments over the past 6 months. I organized it by the major sections in my job description, and it shows the statistics and numbers I have been tracking in regard to the number of calls I have taken, the number of reports that go out, and my on-time completion rate for projects that other managers assign.

SUPERVISOR: Wow! I didn’t realize you did half of this work. Let’s make an appointment next week to discuss this. How is next Monday at 9 AM?

SHAWNA: (thinking to herself) I knew the boss would see things my way if I simply presented the truth in a language that was understandable – data and numbers!

INTERMISSION

Questions for Review:

1. What did Shawna do to improve her persuasive ability?
2. Did the Supervisor react differently this time? Why?
3. What does this tell you about the way you should deal with a supervisor when you are persuading him/her that you deserve a raise? Is simply asking for a raise going to be enough?
4. What does this tell you about how you should approach a situation when you need to persuade someone to do something for you? Will showing facts help you strengthen your case?

5. What does this lesson tell you about keeping track of your accomplishments at work? Do you think truth comes in the form of data and past accomplishments?

PROCESSING SCENARIO C:

Effective Persuader Behavior #4: PERSUADING WITH TRUTH.

Shawna finds that persuasion is easier when it is backed with hard evidence. Truth is proven with data or numbers or statistics that corroborate your idea or wish or need. Without truth to back you up, it will be difficult to persuade anyone to do what you are asking.

AD-LIB the ALTER-ENDING: Ask a student to ad-lib the rest of “SCENARIO C” with the questions below as a guideline for his/her acting:

What do you suppose would have happened to Shawna if she did not have her WIDAR (data sheet of work accomplishments) with her? Would her boss have continued the discussion about a raise?

Feel free to ask more than one student to ad-lib the alter-ending to “SCENARIO C” if they have more ideas.

Teacher Directions

Please review this exercise before introducing the subject to your class. This exercise should take 5 minutes.

Step 1: Have students answer the following questions in their journals:

1. List and describe the steps to being a persuasive communicator.

2. Why is it important to be persuasive in the workplace?

Final Thoughts for Part 1: Innovation, creativity, and imagination happen in all of us. The majority of our ideas take place in the workplace. All of us have great ideas about doing something more cost-effective, efficient, or unique. The trick to making these ideas a reality is convincing others that these ideas can work. Companies count on their employees to develop new ideas, but many times, because we are timid or unconvincing about a new technique or process, we keep the idea to ourselves. Remember that being persuasive at work is part of your job description. The hard part is not creating something new, but convincing others that the idea can work. Being a persuasive communicator at work is a highly sought-after skill by employers. In the eyes of organizational leaders, individuals who possess the skill of persuasive communication are prime candidates for management.