

# ASCA NEWSLETTER

AMERICAN SWIMMING COACHES ASSOCIATION

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## LEADING BY PUTTING YOUR **FOLLOWERS** **First**

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MARCH 22, 2014

By Adam Bryant

This interview with Clorox Company chief executive Don Knauss was conducted and condensed by Adam Bryant.

**Q. Were you in leadership roles when you were younger?**

**A.** I learned a lot of leadership lessons playing football and baseball in high school. But I started to think a lot more in college about what I was going to do. I was working on my master's in history when I decided to join the Marine Corps. There was a service mentality in our family. My dad was Army Air Corps. My brother was Air Force. I was going to be a Marine. That changed everything.

**Q. What did you learn in the Marines about leadership?**

I'll tell you a story. I was stationed on Oahu. The first day I was actually in a line unit — after 15 months of school and training — was on Hawaii, the Big Island. There's a big Army base there where artillery units train and shoot live rounds. They helicoptered me over and I took a jeep to join 120 Marines in this artillery battery. They'd been out in the field for several weeks, and the commanding officer had ordered hot food from the base camp because they'd been eating C rations [canned food] for several days.

I had been up since 5 in the morning, and I was pretty hungry. I started walking over to get in front of the line, and this gunnery

sergeant grabbed my shoulder and turned me around. He said: "Lieutenant, in the field the men always eat first. You can have some if there's any left." I said, "OK, I get it."

That was the whole Marine Corps approach — it's all about your people; it's not about you. And if you're going to lead these people, you'd better demonstrate that you care more about them than you care about yourself. I've never forgotten that, and that shaped my whole approach to leadership from then on.

**Q. When you got out of the Marines, did you know what you wanted to do?**

I learned in the Marine Corps that I really liked strategy. Every operation in the military is based on a five-paragraph order,

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## Continued from Cover



Earl Wilson/The New York Times.

and the acronym is Smeac — situation, mission, execution, administration and communication. It's a very logical flow.

I decided to get into brand management, and Procter & Gamble was a great training ground, and they hired a lot of junior military officers. Procter was more of a written than verbal culture, and business initiatives were structured through short memos. It was almost an exact parallel of the five-paragraph order. I said, "I could fit into that culture."

### Q. What were some other leadership lessons?

One thing I learned very quickly was that there's a head part and a heart part. The head part was, how are you going to focus the organization? And it had better be simple, and it probably should not be more than three things. You've got to communicate it about 100 times and align your incentive structure to it. It's about distilling the complex to the simple, and I've seen leaders fail because they do the reverse, by trying to make things into some intellectual exercise. Whatever business you're in, there are fundamentals, just like blocking and tackling in football. It always comes back to the fundamentals. You cannot let yourself get bored with the fundamentals.

On the heart side, the lesson is that it's all about your people. If you're going to engage the best and the brightest and retain them, they'd better think that you care more about them than you care about yourself. They're not about making you look good. You're about making them successful. If you really believe that and act on that, it gains you credibility and trust. You can run an organization based on fear for a short time. But trust is a much more powerful, long-term and sustainable way to drive an organization.

**"If you're going to engage the best and the brightest and retain them," the Clorox CEO says, "they'd better think that you care more about them than you care about yourself. "**

The other thing I've learned is that you've got to assume the best intent of people, and that they're really trying to do a good job. I've seen organizations that are based more on fear than trust because senior management really thinks people are trying to get one over on them, that they're just punching a clock. People really are trying to do a good job, and they want to be proud of where they work. Understanding that helped make me a bit more patient.

### Q. How do you hire?

First and foremost, I'm looking for fire in the belly. I'm looking for passion. I'm looking for energy. Is the person going to take a leading role and have an impact on the business? I will take passion over pedigree any day of the week. Second, are they smart? Can they think analytically, creatively and strategically? If you don't have the intellectual horsepower, it's going to be hard for people to follow you.

Third, is there any pattern in the person's career that shows they can develop people? Did people move up through an organization because they were mentored by this person? A fourth thing is, can they communicate? Can you imagine this person on a stage, inspiring a large group? Do they have an easy, informal manner? Or are they too formal, too focused on hierarchy? That doesn't work. Formality

slows things down in companies. Informality speeds things up. It is much more powerful to use authority than power.

One of the things I've learned is that as you move up in an organization, you're given more power. The less you use the power you've been given, the more authority people give you, because they think: "You know what? This guy's OK." Persuading people to do things — come along with me because we're going in the right direction — is much more powerful over time.

The last thing I look for is the values of the person. Do they tell the truth, but do they also stand up for what they think is right in the company? It starts with integrity, which is really the grease of commerce. You get things done much more quickly when people trust you. ■

A version of this article appears in print on March 23, 2014, on page BU2 of the New York edition with the headline: Leading by Putting Your Followers First.

### ABOut tHe AUtHoR:

*Twice a week, Adam Bryant talks with top executives about the challenges of leading and managing for Corner Office, a feature in The New York Times and on NYTimes.com.*

# **INSTINCT SCULLING PADDLES**

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# The Newest Coaches' **PROBLEM**

By John Leonard



In the past four months, I've worked at Coaches Clinics in India, Hong Kong, Dublin, and Houston. I've heard the same issue crop up time and again... "Information from the internet is killing us."

In each case it was a parent (or swimmer) going to root around on the internet for an answer they want to hear. This, as an alternative to the authority and education of their own live, real, actual swim coach.

About a month ago, in the Sunday New York Times Opinion page, was a great essay on the various issues revolving around the internet. Specifically, the overabundance of information and the paucity of context.

One Paragraph stands out:

*"The problem is one of limited time and energy meeting limitless content. Knowledge being elbowed out by sheer information. Context be damned."*

Here's an example that the writer presented. Do a search on Google for "freedom" and here is a quote you might find:

*"Liberty is Precious."*

Okay, good, we all agree with that, right?

What if I tell you that the speaker was Vladimir Lenin?

And what if I tell you that immediately following those words, he said, "*So precious that it Must Be RATIONED.*"

## CONTEXT IS EVERYTHING!

Coaches are hearing "I can learn all I want about swimming on the internet." And, "...that's not what I read on the internet." Both swimmers and parents can be misled into totally incorrect information - because the information is presented without context and the typical swimmer or parent cannot discern the correct questions to ask to create context and understanding.

### example:

Swimmer "X" reads on the internet about the limited about of training (and all sprint training) that professional athlete "Y" does today in training. He immediately infers that *this is the way to train.* X or their parent, neglects to find out that Y is 28 years old, a 50 sprinter on the world cup circuit, does 3 hours a day in the gym, and at age 17 (same as X) was training 14K a day in aerobic in water work. (Which is the correct thing a 17 year old SHOULD be

doing. If they want an unlimited swimming career *later on.*) The internet provides NONE of that context and X and his parent have information, but not knowledge or understanding. And the poor coach of X has a huge problem.

Unfortunately, young coaches have the same issues when they look for answers on the internet.

A pretty smart guy by the name of Albert Einstein once said, ***"Everything in life should be made as simple as possible, but no simpler."***

Information on the internet typically makes it simpler than it can be.

Incidentally, I asked a few medical doctors about a thing called *WebMD.* Immediately the eyes started rolling. We are not the only profession suffering from information glut and knowledge starvation. ■

All the Best, JL

# A Long-Term Plan to Further Lift Australian Age Group Swimmers

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By Forbes Carlile

SAL President, John Bertrand, recently wrote the following challenging words:

"Success for Swimming Australia in and out of the water will be a combined effort. If I can help Swimming Australia return to success on the world stage, and all the feeder programs and opportunities associated with that elite pathway and community engagement, then it will be an absolute pleasure to be involved. By 2020 – and this is the big vision – we aim to be the No. 1 swimming nation in the world, from the Olympic podium and the Paralympic podium through to grassroots."

This certainly is a "big, ambitious vision" to head the USA, and the world, by the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games. It should however be remembered that John himself played a substantial part in fulfilling the dream, with him at the helm, in overcoming considerable odds in winning the America's Cup after 132 years of American supremacy.

John Bertrand also said, "Our best weapon will be the world's best process." The SAL President clearly speaks with considerable authority.

Australia may become the No. 1 swimming nation – but it will not be before significant advances are made in process, in regard to will and money being found to first

make possible achieving age-group preeminence.

I nail to the masthead my conviction that ultimately greatest success of a country will be attained from the optimum development of its age group swimmers. SAL needs to pull out all stops by announcing an extended club-funding program before the end of 2014 to be put in place for the build-up to the 2020 Olympics.

After the USA and possibly Japan, our recent National Age Group Championships have shown once again Australia has a foot on the ladder with our number of 13 to 18-year-olds up with the world's best. This is due largely to near-adequately resourced coaching efforts in some of nearly 1000 clubs around Australia.

The extent to which some becomes many, will determine whether Australia will reach the top in open ranks.

Excellent SAL initiatives, those of Go Club and JX, aimed at the grassroots have been established; there are many camps, coaches education opportunities, overseas competitions and altitude training offered along with Podium Centres replacing former Excellence Centres, aiming at senior excellence, preparing them for Rio de Janeiro. These

Podium clubs had to comply with SAL requirements which included already having current International swimmers, and being able to offer "25 hours per week" long course training, which many groups operating in 25 m pools find impossible to finance. There are "high performance" SAL personnel whose efforts, in the main are directed towards serving older HP swimmers. Payments are made to medal winners as well as living grants.

The next vital step for Australian swimming - after wide discussion – should be to move to further boost our strength in Age Group, and announce detailed plans before the end of 2014 to fund the development of proven outstanding age group swimmers who, in a relatively short time, certainly with four years, can be expected to be strong contenders in Australia's Olympic team, this carried out in at least 35 adequately supported club programs.

The point of suggesting a deadline be set for December 2014 for announcing such a future extended funding plan is that there would then remain two years of open and age group National championships for clubs to stake their claims judged on performances before funding would commence on the new, expanded scheme after the 2016 Olympics. This time frame

would give clubs ample time to mobilize and work towards meeting the performance (and other) requirements for contention.

It is argued that performance should be the major criterion in the selection of funding from 2016 to 2020, with periodic review, so that a club can aim at finishing in the top 35 in both National able-bodied point-scores knowing they have a good chance of winning funding.

Any group amassing points from medalists and even from a handful of finalists clearly is likely to be doing a lot right. When a group is producing finalists it is unlikely that this is the result of just good fortune in having a medal-winning, very talented swimmer.

This is a long-term plan. There is time for full consideration of SAL's requirements.

After announcement of this initiative there must be as a result a considerable

stimulating effect resulting in increased effort to lift competitively, spurred on by the prospect of assistance from the \$3.5m annual investment - \$100,000 per club. The competition to be named in the top 35 competitive clubs in Australia and for consequent funding would in itself serve to guarantee a rise in Australia's competitive excellence.

Where there is a will there should be a way, as a major priority, to find this \$3.5m, from SAL's annual budget of \$20m.

The \$100k annually can be easily shown to be much less than required to sustain an active, productive club when the salaries of a head coach and assistants, the replacement of coaches required by SAL for many tours, conferences and the cost of hiring pool space alone are considered. Parent fund-raising alone cannot be expected to fill the gap but knowledge that a club has recognized by SAL may

be expected often to have a snow-balling effect on gaining added financial support from institutions and local commerce.

In addition, a supplementary list of say, the next 20 or 30 clubs in line, but unsuccessful in attaining funding, should be published - and with the knowledge this is from 1000 clubs in Australia, this might be expected to attract local support for the clubs who just missed out on funding.

It is understood that such a "movement" on the lines of the "Podium" initiative will require strict accountability.

The strength of Australian swimming will be ultimately decided on the number and quality of proven talented, young swimmers being developed at home.

Here I rest my case. ■

**Forbes Carlile**

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# 10 Quick Ideas on **Starting a New Position With a New Swim Team**

By John Leonard, ASCA Executive Director



SRJC head swim coach Jill McCormick, right, jokes with members of her team during practice, in Santa Rosa, CA., on April 25, 2014. (ALVIN JORNADA / For The Press Democrat)

You just accepted a new coaching position, signed the contract and moved in. Now, what are the smart first moves?

## 1. Listen to Customers.

Customers are both parent and swimmers. Get the broadest possible sense of the landscape in which you will be operating. KEEP LISTENING!

## 2. WATCH Customers.

Both parents and swimmers. Do the words match the actions? Words can lie. Actions... not so much.

## 3. FIND Alums.

And ask them to tell you the history of the club/program as they remember it. You'll learn a TON about perceptions and relationships. This HISTORY of relationships is organizational gold.

## 4. Read Everything You Can Find.

Budgets, newsletter, old emails to the team; etc. EVERYTHING. Knowledge is the beginning of wisdom.

## 5. Talk to a Mentor.

Bounce what you are learning off someone you trust. Best and safest place to trial your ideas.

## 6. Keep Notes from Every Conversation.

Don't trust your memory.

## 7. Before you take the job, write down your goals for the first 100 days on the job.

What do you want to bring to the job?  
What do you need to learn, quickly?

## 8. Follow Your Heart/Gut.

Trust yourself.

## 9. Commit Fully.

Don't "half take a job." No woulda, coulda, shoulda. Bloom where you planted yourself.

## 10. Report. Report. Report.

You stand out when you report facts fully, correctly and accurately. Make a monthly report your personal discipline. ■

All the Best, John Leonard

# An Honest Approach to a Recurring Issue

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By Ken DeMont

Swim Coach Direct - Monday, April 14, 2014. Weekly commentary on swim topics of interest to coaches and swimmers.

**All swim coaches deal with kids who “drop in and out” of full intention. It never ends. What makes the sport so interesting is that the personalities continue to change. As new kids come on board the way to “get to them” must change. This is what makes coaches standout. Are they able to communicate in a way that is honest while still being able to keep the listener tuned in?**

Ken is particularly good at this. The names of the swimmer and school have been changed “to protect the innocent”!

Hi Spencer,

First off I do appreciate your wanting to own your swimming and behavior.... This is why you are no doubt my favorite swimmer! With that in mind I will keep these thoughts between you, me and

Don. I am going to be frank with you as that is the best way for you to get where I am coming from.

Please do not try to curb your humor...I love it! It is part of who you are and it can add so much to what we are doing. You can be funny and a fine swimmer at the same time.

Now onto swimming; as Don stated at one meeting we had, he and I take our swimming very seriously, but we don't take ourselves that seriously. We expect our swimmers to do the same.

We coach our club team that is full of swimmers who have this mentality. There are lots of smiles and laughter along with a ton of focus and intense training. This is what inspires me to continue to coach as if I ever felt we were less than that as a group I would look elsewhere to do something that inspired me.

Those in the NBA senior group who are looking to cut corners and not add to the team with their efforts are talked to and

sometimes moved to a different group that more fits their idea of how much they want to put into it. It is not a crime to want to dabble at this sport; it is just not how I am wired nor is Don wired that way.

Coaching Monson is interesting in that my sense is that many in the group, given a choice would like to dabble...work not too diligently...have a bit of fun...not worry too much about it. Don and I have no interest in that type of set up. The culture that was Monson swimming before we started coaching the team was very much that way. As an example sun tanning was part of the practice on a nice day. It has taken us nearly 3 seasons to change the culture and truthfully we are not quite there yet. We still have some who have been in the group who are doing as little as possible. We are making sure those moving into the program or will be there for the next couple of years do not have that mindset, which is where you come in.

You are ending your first season with us. I am looking at all our freshman and sophomores and assessing what they



NVSwim Kids swim lesson program air session. (Source: NBPools.com)

do at practice and what they bring to the team. Are they hard workers interested in getting better? Or are they content to not be the best they can be given the limited time they put into the activity? Again I don't really care that much about how fast someone is I only care about the process in which they approach what we do.

Many of the freshman and sophomores have proven to me their commitment to the team and I will coach them like I do my national level swimmers as they have earned that benefit (and yes it is a benefit). Truthfully Spencer, the jury is still out on you. It is hard for me to tell whether you are all in or not...you have been injured a bit...the aerobics of the group you have had a difficult time embracing, so your improvement is not what it could/ should be. This is my opinion and believe it or not I am pretty good in assessing what I see in practice.

Interestingly enough after your crash landing dive that came the very day I gave the "talk" and got me to tell you don't do that again, your next dive was done with

much more focus. I could see it on your face. It is also interesting to note that the others on the team saw that I wasn't pleased with what I considered less than your best on what we were doing. They saw that there was a line that shouldn't be crossed and they are smart enough not to. We did more dives yesterday and all who were there were on point....we improved as a team while still having fun, and isn't that what this is all about?

Again none of this is a reflection on you Spencer as a person. He is a totally cool guy I am happy to know. This is about Spencer the guy on the swim team and what he is adding to what we do. There are certainly others I am targeting as well to add more...you are not being singled out.

So now that I have written a novel, can I get you to really do your best over these last few weeks...to see how much you can learn and improve? I don't know much in this world but one thing I am really good at is knowing when people in swimming pools are doing less than they are capable

of....be one of the ones who does their best....excellence is always a good thing

See you at the pool! ■

Ken DeMont

*After retiring from swimming, Ken jumped into coaching at the rec league level, where he coached the Tiburon Peninsula Club in Northern California. In the 14 years of leading that team, the TPC was league champions every season. Ken also ran a very successful lesson program, teaching young kids the principles of stroke technique he learned from Ann Curtis. Since then Ken has taken on swimming at the US Swimming level, first forming an age group team and more recently venturing into senior swimming. His team, North Bay Aquatics has recently had its first qualifiers at the national level with the promise of more to come. Ken has also run a successful Masters program for over 20 years, working with Tri-athletes and open water swimmers as well as pool swimmers. Ken is a father of two very successful swimmers in their own right.*

# Keeping People IN THE WATER

From the ASCA 2013 World Clinic Yearbook

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By Bill Brenner

**Bill Brenner provides support to the more than 1,500 US Masters Swimming (USMS) registered clubs and workout groups nationwide and helps build new programs. He also works closely with the USMS Coaches Committee to develop and administer the USMS Coach Certification program. Bill works with LMSCs and host clubs to bring the certification program to the membership at large. Bill believes continuing education for coaches and recruitment of new coaches are critical to the continued success of the organization. He and his wife of 30 years, Pam, also UNC alum, have four grown children. They're active at their alma mater and endow a swimming scholarship to the varsity program.**

## Introduction by Scott Bay:

He is currently the Director of Club and Coach Services for United States Master Swimming. But he is indeed the coach; he has been coaching in all levels from Age Group to Senior to college and Masters. He's also been one of those people instrumental in a lot of our committees for USMS. I'm very, very excited to be working with him, not only with the certification program but with also helping to grow USMS. So without me saying too much

more, I would like to introduce Bill Brenner.

**Brenner:** Thanks Scott. How many Masters coaches do we have in here today? Anybody coach Age Group or high school as well? Excellent. Good; this will help you. I'm very fortunate in my position as the Club and Coach Service Director to be able to travel across the country and see programs much like yours, that have different kinds of programming. The majority that I visit obviously have a Masters program, but on occasion I will go visit a club that has an Age Group but no Masters program. I ask myself: Looked at all these children swimming in the pool, one day I wonder how many of them will end up being a Masters swimmer? Right now, based on the history of where we have come from, that number is not very good. It is actually quite small.

What we need to do as an organization, and what I would like to get some help from you—as Masters coaches and Age Group coaches—is to kind of change that culture and try to figure out why we are having such difficulty in keeping people in the pool. We all know the health benefits that swimming provides. It doesn't stop because they get to a certain age; and we will call it age 18. Quite a few other things may enter into their lives that make it difficult for them to

want to stay in the pool. If you're a parent, you understand it; if you are a coach, you understand it; but it doesn't mean that we can just turn our heads and just ignore the fact that maybe we are not doing as much as we can to help them stay in the water.

So what we are going to talk a little bit about today is transitioning these young athletes into Masters swimmers. Why some of the things that we want to encourage them to do, and what we are going to promote within our own programs, is going to help them make that transition. Whether it's volunteering efforts, whether it is officiating, whether it is coach involvement. Now see I had put that up because you are like how is any of that going to connect? Maybe it will get your attention in the fact that maybe I should pay a little closer attention and figure out how this comes full-circle as we move further along here.

How many of us have known somebody that was an Age Group swimmer that really they had it all. I mean, they were successful as a swimmer, they were successful as a teammate, they were the kind of person that you thought who was going to really turn-out to be a very successful adult. It was the kind of person that you would want your own child to be friends with. That kind of person. But how many of you have seen



USMS Club Development Guru Bill Brenner was all business in the 200 free. (Photo: Mike Lewis – Courtesy of U.S. Masters Swimming)

somebody that when they became an adult later on, did not quite turn out the way you envisioned that they would when they were youngster? Well, what went wrong? We're going to try to pay a little bit of attention to that today, and figure out: is there anything that we could have done as coaches to effect a better outcome.

Now obviously we cannot take responsibility for every one of our athletes that comes through our program, that we mentor. But what can we do to maybe even keep one from following into a despair situation? Well as coaches, this is what we are trying to do. We are trying to develop a partnership with our athletes. We have certain talents as coaches; and our athletes have time, talents and hopefully some knowledge and ability. But how do we develop and keep that partnership going beyond the time that they are in our program?

Well, we are also trying to develop a certain amount of trust that we have with one another. You know, they are trusting us that we are going to, as coaches we are going to look out for their best interest. As

athletes, we are going to trust that they are going to give us the effort that we are asking them to give us, whether it is in practice or in the meets. But yet at the same time, why does that trust have to stop? Why does it stop with the last race? You know, so many times you see the athletes just finished, they've done their last race—whether it is an Olympic Trials, whether it is, you know, a Sectional; whatever the case may be... or their last high school meet. Maybe as a coach you are thinking: Well, the next coach will take responsibility. Or if there is not going to be a next coach, Hey, they are old enough; they can take care of themselves now. I have done my job as a coach.

I would like to challenge everyone—whether you are an Age Group coach, a Masters coach, a high school coach, a college coach—maintain that level of responsibility beyond your program. As Masters coaches especially—and I will touch on this later—welcome these people into your programs. Do not wait and stay on the deck, wait for them to show up; go seek those young athletes out. Whether it

is seeking them out at their high schools and their coaches at high-school level, or their Age Group program. Do not wait; be proactive.

Always accept the challenge to open-up doors to a positive pathway. Sounds kind of altruistic, but it is really true. You want to, like I said, go out and seek these people. Don't just sit back and wait; really help that one athlete from falling into despair. You may think, oh, what is the worst thing that can happen? Well, there is a lot of bad things that can happen, especially when they get away from home, away from their support structure, that they are so used to being involved in.

You know, we as swimmers... and my wife will tell me all the time: you guys are crazy. They are like: you depend on your routine, you depend on your support structure with your athletes, with the other people that are in the sport with you—whether you travel across the country—and you really are into this thing about goals. It's real important that each day, it seems like you are waking up with something... you have got a

## Keeping People in the Water (Continued)

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mission, you have got an agenda. Well you know what, so do these athletes when they were in these Age Group programs and even the high school programs. You can bet that they are working their butts off, and they are trying like crazy, to obtain their certain goals.

Their coaches do a really good job of two things:

- ▶ Helping them establish goals, and
- ▶ Helping them - what I want to call - manage the expectations.

Every athlete has certain abilities, and they have certain talents; and as coaches, you need to not set the bars too high, where they are going to fail. We, as coaches, need to understand: nobody wants to fail, they want to succeed. That's why we set goals that are attainable. As Masters coaches that is very important too. You know, as adults we all want to set goals; we want to attain certain levels. You know, can we become national champions on a Masters level? Well maybe some can and maybe some cannot, but what other goals can we help them establish?

The point I am getting is when people get away from their routines, they tend to pick-up bad habits. These bad habits can lead to quite some astounding figures. So, there was a study done back in 2009 by the Women's Sports Foundation; and this is kind of common sense. I thought 'Well, I am just going to say this out loud,' but I said, "You know what, I really need to find some facts." I think people just make all these assumptions: you know, swimming is good for you. If you swim with a group, it is going to help, it is going to help your self-esteem. Great. But had they really studied this? I thought I would present some things to you today that maybe you can go back and do some research on to expand your knowledge level to: how can I apply this to my program, and is this that important.

So here is this study. They just really studied women; and I am sure that applies to men as well. But the benefits of sports helps reduce all these or preventing risk to women: obesity, coronary heart disease, etc. You know everything to eating

disorders. But there is even one more that is really probably something that maybe has touched every one of you in some way, you know: the risk of not participating. So here are the benefits of participating, and here is the risk of not participating.

Another study that was done, and it really studied the amount of depression that is out there with young people. And this is both men and women. The risk of suicide. Studies conducted by Brown and Blanton show that young adults who participate in sports, a team activity—and that is very important - are less likely to attempt to suicide. But that team activity provides about three different things that are very important: it provides a coach that is giving support; it provides other athletes in the program or in that sport that are going to be a support structure, and in many cases there is parental involvement. Now, not every athlete has parental involvement, I understand that; but it is just one more of those support structures that provide that sense of being, that sense of... not being alone. So many times, the depression happens when people feel that they are alone and it helps to be involved in a team activity.

More risk. Well is suicide that big a deal with this age group? I'm saying this is like the, you know, 16-24 age group—well, 15-24, excuse me. Well the US Center for Disease Control did a study in 2008, and determined that suicide is the third leading cause of death amongst this age group in America. Suicide is only followed by homicide and accidental death.

So the number is really... if you hear about a death, there is a good chance that... 1 in 8 deaths is a suicide. I have been touched by a suicide; I have seen the devastating effects that it can cause. Not someone on my team, thank goodness, but my family friend's daughter. It was just very devastating. Everybody was asking: what could I have done? You know, we were not... it was just very, very sad, and what could we have done. Hopefully we as coaches can reduce that by including more and more people into our programs and keeping them swimming.

Well who are these people? You know, we keep using them, those, this. Scott Bay, he always asks when I talk about them and they—not necessarily with this—but: who are they? You know, he is like, can you define who those people are? Well, I wanted to define who those people are, and try to understand them a little bit better. Has anybody heard the word Millennials? It's the Generation Y. It's these 18-34 year-olds that have been born between 1982 and 2001. Do you realize they account for 27% now of our U.S. population? That is 86 million people. That is a big number.

Now these Millennials, the Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association of America conducted a study in 2011 and they found that 60% of those 86 million Millennials are engaged in a fitness pursuit. But what kind of fitness pursuit? I mean, are they doing push-ups, sit-ups; what are they doing? Are they swimming? Well, those 60%, they want to gravitate towards a group fitness; it is very important to understand this group. Now, this group fitness is different than a team sport, because a team sport basically has a winner and a loser. This group does not necessarily want to participate in something that has a winner and a loser; they want to participate in an event or in a sport where they can motivate each other to do their personal bests.

Now can we think of any examples of some of these events that are going on in this day and age that we did not have 20 years ago? Triathlon; that is great, good. How about Tough Mudders? Things like that. I mean, even down I know my kids have been doing this color run, you know. It is not about the winning and losing; it is about the participating. Sometimes it is just about the accomplishment of finish.

As Masters coaches, I want you to learn from some of this, because I want you to be able to go back to your programs and say, what can I do that is going to attract these people? Well, you are going to have to make it fun; and you are going to have to try to figure out how to make it a group effort, not just an individual effort—like so much of our sport really is. So they value that team effort for participants to achieve

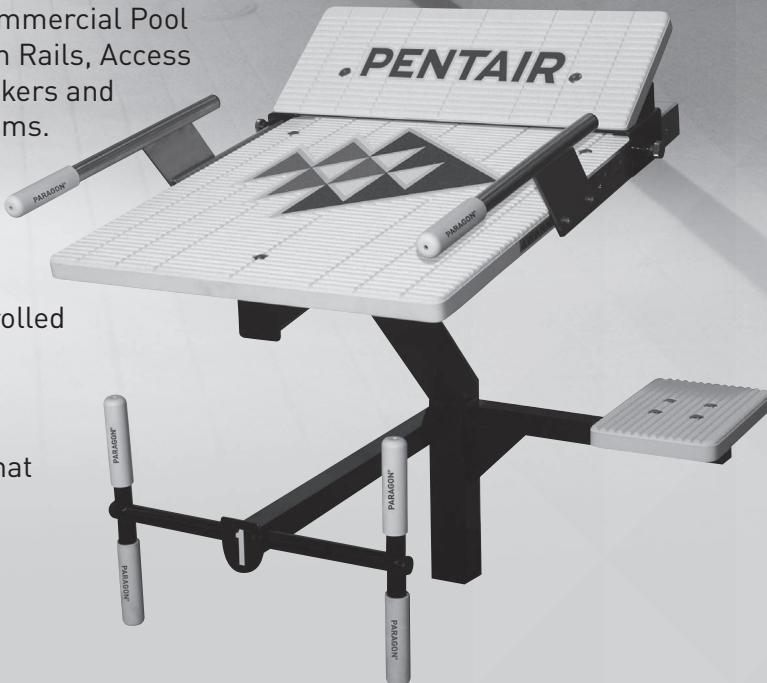


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## Keeping People in the Water (Continued)

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individual goals; just maybe the sense of accomplishment of completing the event. Completing a 5K or 10K, you know, half a marathon or a marathon. That is real important to understand that as we bring this back to our programs.

Now the Millennials. This day and age, it is a lot about socialization; I mean, look at the what we have got with this interactive community going on between Twitter and Facebook. They are connected 24/7, unlike generations before them. How do we use this as a media to attract people to our programs? Well, if you have got a website, great; but you may still be ten years behind-the-time if you have not gone to some other social media to attract these people and make it fun for them to be active in your program. So look at including some more things.

Now, I am not expecting... I do not know how to do all these things. But I want to recruit somebody in my program that does, that may be much better at it than I am. You know, it is always, in programs, looking for: who else can contribute, who else can take some ownership in the program, who else can help me be better at what I do, and who can attract some of these people that are going to come into the program and have more fun?

Now these Millennials, also based on this research that has been done, they have a greater participation in team sports than any generation before them. Important. Because while we are a sport of individual performances, we should still consider our sport and our programs as a team activity—very important.

So are youth swimmers staying in the pool? Well how many youth swimmers are out there? When I thought about this, I was like: well are there really that many? I mean, how many people, how many kids swim USA [Swimming] or high school? Let us do high school first? (That is this first slide.) Here is 2012-2013 academic year; there were 302,000+ swimmers, boys and girls, that swam or dove. I cannot believe the majority of those were divers; I am thinking they were probably majority were swimmers. We have got that many athlete

participating as freshman, sophomores, juniors and seniors? Now USA Swimming, they have got 331,000+ total athletes. This is the age groups, here, that we are looking at. This is these ages right here: there is that many 16 year-olds, that many 17 year-olds, 18 year-olds, 19+. 59,000. That is a lot of swimmers; not as many as high school, but that is quite a big number. Now NCAA. This is the Division I, II, and III; 2011-12 season. There were 21,000 total swimmers and divers.

Now what do we have for Masters swimmers in this age group? Well, we have 55,000 total members. This is the part that kind of got my attention. In this age group, only 3,275 men and women participate in Masters swimming. It is 6% of our membership, which is, I think, extremely low, based on the fact that there is this pool of swimmers. It is not like we have to teach these people to swim, you know. So here is the source of swimmers, here is the number, and that is kind of the ration of the ration of people participating; and it is just very low. And I think when coaches, Masters coaches especially, are looking for hey, how am I going to grow my program; well let us look at the source and see if maybe we can tap-into all these people that already know how to swim that may want to participate and we just need to make it fun and give them what the benefits are of swimming.

So here is the problem: can you really burn-out of Swimming at age 18? I can understand, maybe, burning-out of competing at a very high level. But let us all face it: how many of us in here actually swim? Do we have some swimmers? I mean, we do not burn-out of that feeling of how we feel when we finish a swim practice? That is a great sense of accomplishment, just doing a swim practice when you are an adult, or maybe even as a Millennial. Why shouldn't they want to continue-on with that feeling? I can understand the competition; but I just do not understand why we cannot want them to have that feeling of accomplishment, even if it is just something as simple as a swim practice.

So let us look at these obstacles and

objections. I call them excuses, because... well they are obstacles and objections, but I hear the excuses when I approach these young people.

I don't want to wake-up and go to the pool at five am. Hey, I do not either, you know. I do not swim at five a.m.; I do not even like coaching at five am. But guess what? Masters, we have plenty of times available that are not five o'clock in the morning. If you do not have that as an option in your program, look to try to include maybe an 8:30, maybe a Noon practice, maybe an evening practice. That's not really my favorite one.

I am tired of competing. I hear that a lot, and I understand. Hey, guess what? 70% of our membership in United States Masters Swimming does not compete. They do it for the fitness; they do it maybe to help with another sport, like to do a triathlon. Most of these people I swim with, they do it for socialization. They want to be around other like-minded individuals, they have something in common they share with. You know, maybe their spouse does not swim and does not understand that, but when they get around other swimmers, hey, we are all won big happy family. You really would be surprised how you can open-up to people that are just not really friends, but that are swimmers because they are just have a common bond.

I want to try a different sport. I would want to try the sport she is doing right now, if she was going to help me learn how to do a better push up. I understand that, you know. They have done Swimming. Swimming is a year-round sport; it does not give them very many opportunities to participate in other sports—I understand that. But when you get to this level in the Masters situation, it can complement other sports, even if they want to just swim a couple of times a week. It can also enhance maybe some of the other performances. It does not have to be a triathlon; it can be running or cycling.

I don't have time. I get that a lot too, because you know, life gets in the way. There are a lot of people that go off to college and they have got to study and they have got to work, they have got to support

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themselves through school—a lot of things. But you know what? When you feel that sense of accomplishment of just getting through a practice and you are in a great positive environment; you are going to find enough time, even if it is just two or three times a week, to really get that feeling. Really understand, hey, this is important, I should continue this, and I will find the right amount of time if you can help them.

It cost too much money. You know, they are on limited budgets, maybe; or maybe they are just starting-out with their family and there is just like... yeah, just more one bill I can afford to pay. The good news is that the yearly registration fee for United States Masters Swimming—by the time the LMSC tacks on their fee—is an average of \$40. \$40 for the year; I mean, we are talking one cup of coffee a month, you know. Then some programs have a fee, but they will waive it for you, for even seasoned swimmers. So that may be an obstacle, but maybe it is something that you can help them overcome. Maybe you can set-up a scholarship fund, and maybe you can have some of the older athletes in your program develop, you know, some financial aid for these swimmers.

Here is one: most Masters swimmers are old and slow. I am going to get in there and it is going to be a terrible workout; I would rather just swim on my own. Well, you know what? We are not all old and slow. You know, membership begins at age 18. We have got everything from beginner swimmers all the way up to Olympic athletes that swim in our program. I like to make sure they understand that competition is optional, having fun is mandatory, and the byproduct is really a fit and a healthy lifestyle.

So the more that we as coaches know this and can really tell people about this, the better chance we are going to have of them participating. Well, those are the obstacles, but let us listen to somebody that actually is a young swimmer.

[Video begins]

...have access to really knowledgeable coaches that can help us, inspire us, learn

about the techniques. and you know, push us to do better... people who have more knowledge and more experience... and then more knowledge about things outside of swimming as well.

Does it help you with the stress level as well? Oh my gosh, yes. ... To be able to get away, I look forward to that all day long. Getting away, having an hour and 15 minutes to really just crank-in-out in the pool. Forget about everything for a few minutes. It is really nice.

Would you recommend Masters Swimming for other colleges and universities?

Of course. I have been swimming since my freshman years, since I came to Butler. Starting out my freshman year, I had a difficult time transitioning to college, and I think Masters is kind of what helped me to stick with, you know, staying away from home and being able to kind of create a community of really welcoming people that just really helped me get through school.

[Video ends]

Brenner: Well I hope you got kind of a feel for that, but there are actually quite a few people out there that do participate and find benefits in the programming.

Well when do you start thinking about: hey, you should think about swimming Masters? I mean, is this too young? I do not know. Maybe they just need to aware of what Masters is, you know. First of all, these people probably will become Master swimmers because they like the equipment; they like the snorkel, the fins. Most Master swimmers that I coach, you know, when the going gets tough, they just start throwing that on equipment on to make practice a little bit more fun and a little easier. So, these probably could become Master swimmers without too much effort.

A little story. Cal Berkeley: anybody from California, in that area? Yeah. They have a nice program there; they have a rec center. The sport and rec center of the university runs the facilities, the two pools that they have on campus. They have a Masters program that is called Cal Aquatic Masters.

Well earlier this year, they invited me to come-up because they were having this real problem recruiting young people. Here it is: they are the sport and rec department at Cal Berkeley and they cannot figure out ways to get more young people, the 18-24 year-olds, to participate on their Masters team. They have opened the Masters team up to the community. They have got 185 members; but of the 185, only 10 were age 18-24, on this campus of 30,000 students.

So they are coming to me saying... well they are inviting me to come-out and asking me: what can we do to promote swimming for this age group? What does USMS have that we can use to increase the number of students that are participating? We are the student activity center, we are the student rec center, our mission is to provide benefits and services to the students; it is their student fees that are running this pool.

I am like, wow, what do we have? Well we have coaches and we educate our coaches in how to really welcome these people in, but we really do not have any specific programs. I said, "What have you tried?" They've tried quite a few things and nothing worked. Well I said, "When do the students come back to school?" They come back to school at the end of August. Fortunately, I knew that they had this thing called Caltopia, which is an expo where a lot of vendors, a lot of student clubs, a lot of sponsors of the university come and set-up booths for these students. Basically a welcoming party that lasts two days. So I said, "Well look, let me come out to Caltopia and let's set up a booth. Let's find out a little bit more about what these people are looking for."

Not only did we set-up a booth for two days—that we were in for seven hours and we did something interactive where they were tossing a ring around caps and they were winning prizes that USMS provided—but I also set up a stroke clinic. Because it is one thing to talk about it, but let us get to the pool; let me encourage you to come and touch the water, listen to one of the coaches, and find out more about maybe some of the teammates that you will be participating with, swimming with.

## Keeping People in the Water (Continued)

Well, over two days—it was seven hours on a Sunday and a seven hours on a Monday—we had quite a few people come by the booth, and the biggest thing was they were just not aware of what United States Masters Swimming was. They were not aware of what Masters Swimming was; they were not aware that there was a club that they could even swim on at the university. Now, not all of these were freshman, because these were not only the... you know, all underclassmen, grad students, faculty, staff, alumni; they were all invited to this Caltopia. It really was like wow, there is just so many people that just do not even know what we are about.

Now, when you throw that word Masters out, then they are like, first thing they are thinking, well I am not good enough. We have got to overcome that. Or I do not know all four strokes, so I must not be able to participate. Got to overcome that. But when the day was done, or those two days

were done, we had over 750 people sign-up to receive more information. We did a good enough job in the short amount of time that we had with each of those people, to give them something that they would want to find out more about.

Now on that Tuesday, I made arrangements with one of the Cal assistant men's coaches to help me run a clinic; because I thought it would be a little more star-power if I could get him to do it with me and also four of his athletes to show backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly and freestyle. Fortunately, he cooperated, and we had a stroke clinic. We had 55 people there, which was a pretty good number. I mean, we did not have to pull teeth to get them there, we just had to raffle-off a backpack. But they got in the water and they could swim. There was nobody that got in the pool that could not swim, that we were going to start from scratch. They were just, wow, this was so nice to be able to find out something, and

be encouraged to come; not wait for me to find it.

So as coaches, I hope that you can maybe take a little bit something back of how important it is to be pro-active with this group. You know, maybe they want to find it in the social media or maybe they need to find it on a website, or maybe they need to find it just by me putting a flier up in the right place at the right time. But inviting them in.

This awareness, it really is important to make sure you understand what these Millennials are about and what they are looking for. They want to have fun and they want to participate as a group. It is not about individual sports. Maybe a few of them will, but most of them will not.

You know, hey look, our meet do not have qualifying times; if we do, they are very liberal. So they need to understand: well am I going to be chasing that time again,

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am I going to be chasing that qualifying time that they had to chase all those years as our competitor swimmers, as kids. Or are they going to be able to participate with us, where it is very liberal. Also the beauty of this relay structure that we have, we add the ages, especially for meters; that is beautiful. They love that, where they can swim with not just their age group, but they can swim with maybe their parents, maybe they can swim with... other members that are not just in that same very narrow age. So that is a good thing to promote.

Also we are going to promote what these benefits are. Now we know these, but do they know it? Do they realize how important it is? Probably not. They usually do not realize it until it is too late. So make sure that you are going through these benefits, and talk about this continuity of lifestyle. Being able to establish goals, being able to maintain routines and key positive habits. Here is one part that they really do not get yet because they are too young. I mean, how many of us would have loved it if we had gotten into a situation where we knew or had a good chance that we were going to be able to find a job, get a job reference, get some sort of help financially, maybe some advice colleges... you know, a multitude of things that we as Masters swimmers can provide to our youth through networking. You know, I wish I had that when I was growing up, but I did not even... I probably would not have accepted it even if somebody told me about it because I just did not realize the value of it. Well I think now with our economy, with the way that job market is etc., I think you are going to find more young people accepting of the fact that hey, networking is a good thing and I really want to be around these people that are going to look out for me and help me.

This indoctrination of these kids, it really needs to come without forcing it down their throat. What we have seen in some of the programs is, you know, this is a two way street. We like this volunteering, where the kids are volunteering at our Masters meets and our Masters swimmers are volunteering at the kids meets, because it shows that there is a common bond and it does not stop when you just stop swimming

as an Age Group swimmer. It sees that hey look, they can respect what we do when we were swimming; and not only can we respect what they do, but we are the advocates, we are the ambassadors, of our sport.

We know how to speak swim-speak, and we should take the opportunity to do that when we are volunteering as timers or anytime that we are on the deck when we have young swimmers around, and praise what they do in swim-speak. You know, they will respect that because you are talking something that they maybe do not hear other adults talk about. You know, everything from hey, that was a great start, that was a good streamline, hey you had a good second-half split; whatever it is that really gets their attention that man, they were paying attention to what I was doing and they are talking this language that I understand.

The other thing I like to see is when Age Group programs, high school programs, even college programs, work to volunteer together for a common goal away from the deck. Whether it is raising money for a common cause, through swim-a-thons, car washes—whacky-relay days I like to call them. Also providing community service as a group for something that is coming into the pool, whether it is Special Olympics, or learn-to-swim clinics; something that gives-back to the community that makes you feel... builds that unity.

So how early on do you start? You start as soon as you can, mingling the two groups. It is just a life-long thing that you as coaches, as Age Group coaches especially, want to make sure that you are teaching these kids, that you are giving them, a skill that you expect them to learn and you expect them to use for the rest of their lives. Not just until they are done with your program. This is something I want to see you continue until you cannot swim anymore. This is swimming for life, and very important.

Banquet participation—this is just one more little quick idea. Where you are, maybe as Masters swimmers/coaches, are volunteering at their awards banquet.

Maybe at yours, you are recognizing some of their swimmers for being great volunteers at your events. You know, nobody can get too much praise. If you look for opportunities to do something positive and to speak positive and to recognize people for the work that they do; take that opportunity to do it and give an award out.

This guy, I know you cannot really see the expression on his face, but it was like... he is a USA [Swimming] official, and somebody asked him to officiate a Masters meet. As he is looking like, who me? Well, yes, you. We want to make sure that as many officials are helping each other in these events as possible. You know, the successful events that we run as Masters or the successful events you run as Age Group, depend on volunteers. I mean, we are not paying for people to be timers, we are not paying for people to be food runners; etc. Or officials, in most cases. Sometimes you will give them a gift, and maybe in some LMSCs or LSCs you do pay them. But in Florida, we do not; we just depend on their generosity and where they are willing to donate their time and talent. But we are encouraging it because it just creates more of that overlap: it is not them and us, it is we.

Now coaches here is the tricky part: what do you do as a coach to really be as effective as you possibly can be in recruiting new members, as Masters coaches, that are in this age group? Also as Age Group and high school and college coaches, to make that awareness.

You know, one of the obstacles that we did not talk about and I want to talk about here is, you know, a lot of people do not want to continue to swim because they did not like their coach. They did not like the way they were treated, they did not like it getting yelled at; and I will be damned, they are not going to do it as an adult. They are not going to put themselves in that situation.

Now Masters coaches, you have to realize, they may not have had the same experience that maybe you did as an Age Group swimmer with your coach. So what kind of coach are you going to be for these Master swimmers? Are you going to take the time to really understand what they are

## Keeping People in the Water (Continued)

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looking for? Are you going to reach-out to them and explain the fact that hey, you are here to help them and help them reach their goals, but you are not going to do it, maybe, as they were treated before. Maybe that is what they are looking for; maybe it is not. But so many times I am coming across that: I just did not like my coach and I am not going to be put in that situation again. So I challenge you as Masters coaches to be the best coach that you can, set goals, for your way as a coach.

You know, a lot of coaches say: well am I good coach? Well, how do I evaluate myself as a coach? Here is how I look at it: you can have all the national qualifiers, you can have national champions, and you can have award-winning teams; but at the end of the day, if as a Masters coach, you do not retain your members, then there is something wrong. You know, if those swimmers that are in your program do not want to come back to your program, year-after-year, then you should evaluate, maybe, some of the mistakes that you are making and, maybe, figure-out ways that you can retain that membership.

We as an organization, our national average is 63%. So that means that 37% of the people do not renew their membership the next year. Why? Well, we have not done real studies on that yet, but a lot of it is got to do with the coaching leadership. Because what we have done is we have looked at our Masters coach certification program, and when we empowered coaches to become better coaches and we have identified those coaches that want to continue their education, we have gone back after a year now and studied their retention rate. National average, 63%; coaches that are looking to expand their education, 88%. There is a big difference; I mean, that is huge. It is just not 1% or 2%; we are talking 27%. So that is a good sign.

So I encourage you as coaches: be looking to innovate. Change your style if you feel like that is going to help you retain members and be a better coach. (We're just totally off this slide now, because I just... I really like talking about how to judge what a good coach would be like.)

Dual programming is very important. You know, Masters, and they really have to understand they have a couple of things going for them, Masters swimmers especially. Why more Age Group programs do not have Masters programs in them, I do not know. But I know the ones that do, have a better... have a more-stable pool situation. Because Masters swimmers have two things: they have pockets, with money in them in most cases, and they have some political clout, they vote.

That's very important, when you are facing pool closure; when you are facing maybe even in a facility, limited pool time, reduced lane space etc. We are providing a great service to the community. We are a community program; we are not a swim team, we are a program. It's for adults, age 18 and up, that choose Swimming as their form of exercise.

(Oh, maybe there is another slide. Oh, I think there is not another slide.) At this point, do you have any specific questions of the things that we have talked about? We will do those first, and then maybe we will talk about some things that were just not even presented today that you may want to share with the rest of the people in the pool... (in the pool?) in the audience or with me. Any questions? Yes sir.

Audience: Is that age group the lowest percent of USMS? I mean, I know you are talking about that it is roughly 15% of all people that were in the 15-19 age group that swim. How do the numbers of that age group compare to all the other age groups?

Brenner: Well, we have got this bell curve going on. The biggest age group for United States Masters Swimming, is the 45-49 range for men and 40-44 range for women.

Audience: Now, is the push from US Masters to grow the younger side, is that why this talk is important to you? Or is that-

Brenner: It is important to our organization; it is important to the growth of the organization. We can continue to try to grow at the top end and we can try to continue to grow at the tail end. But if we do not retain members, from one thing,

we are not going to grow, because that is where growth starts, is with retention. But it also starts with: why do not we take this pool of people that can swim and get them involved early, and there is a good chance they will stay involved and even grow the numbers even more.

It's for growth, and it is for coaches too, because there are so many coaches out there that would love to make this as a profession, even Masters coaches. You can do it with the right number of people. With the right plan, with the right business plan. But when you are only in a situation where there is: oh, how am I going to do this with 50 people? I am going to have to charge them \$500 a month to be able to support me and my family. Well, what we are trying to do is increase the numbers: we are trying to increase the numbers of facilities that offer Masters Swimming, and we are also trying to increase the number of people that want to participate in Masters Swimming. So coaches then have a bigger pool of people—so to speak, pool—that will be able to generate revenue, whether it is through program fees, whether it is through events that they host, clinics that they hold, or even private swim lessons. That's kind of the push, and it is trying to really find the benefits that those Millennials are looking for.

Audience: What is the highest returning rate? I am just curious if it is that 25-29 age group? What is the biggest group of new members? What group—do you guys know that—where the most new people join? Do you know what ages?

Brenner: Well most people come back into the sport at 40. I do not know the number, but that is kind of that is that point where more new people are coming-in at that age than any other age. So give and take a few years, in that range.

Audience: When I was 34 years-old—and I'm now 52—a neighbor of mine said, "What do you do for fun?" I had a two-year-old at the time. I said, "Well, I simply kind of take care of the two-year-old," or whatever. She says, "Well did you used to swim?" Knowing that I originally come



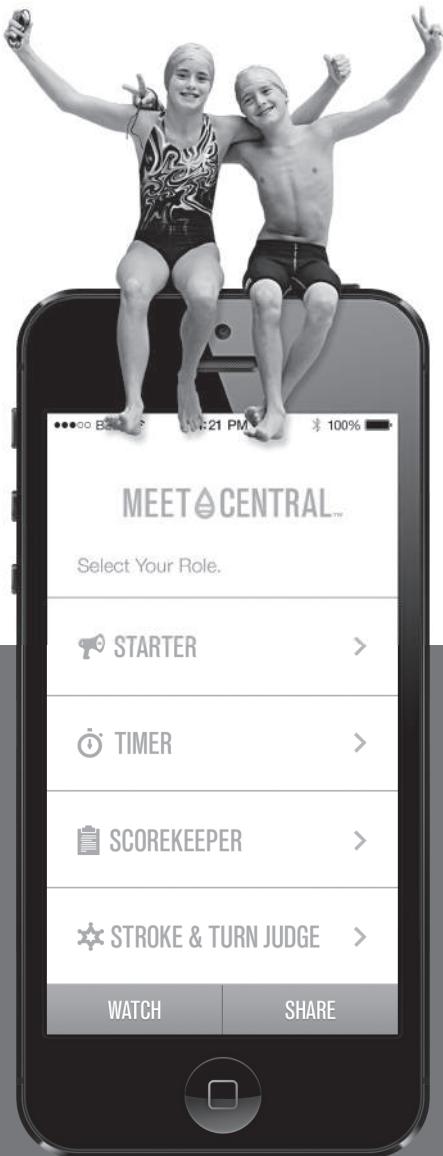
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## Keeping People in the Water (Continued)

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from California, said like, "Yeah, I did." She says, "Well, you should come do Masters." The first thing I thought was 'Oh, I'm not that good.' You know, whatever. I had not been in the pool for 13 years and certainly was competent, but I was like you know Masters to me it - the name implied, you know, champion. That you are a master, whatever.

Brenner: Yes. That word Masters. Yes. Proficiency, competition.

Audience: So I went to practice, and I have been going ever since. I coached in college, I coached in high school; it got me all back into it. It was a real eye-opener, and it has been a load of fun. I mean, our oldest swimmer was in his 90s when he passed away, and our youngest swimmer, we did get some 18-24 year-olds.

But I think kind of the same thing is going on, where the name sometimes is misleading. If you can get those kids to join, they have a ball and they bring such energy to your club. We brought a couple to Y Nationals, and they had a ball. You know, realizing that hey, this is not just a bunch of old fogies. Even if we are old fogies, we still are fit and having fun. We are not, you know, our team has been around for a long time.

Brenner: If they can see that early enough on, even as those young kids, as volunteers at the meets, you have got a good chance that they at least have some awareness; because that is what is lacking. When I am standing in line at Caltopia talking to high school swimmers that yeah, I swam in high school. Well have you heard about Masters? Never heard about it. Well, did that coach not really even mention it? That's what I am thinking to myself, like are we as national organization doing that poor of a job of encouraging high school coaches, college coaches, Age Group coaches, to even bring-up the subject of: there is some continuity if you want to continue on. We are just not doing it.

Audience: I actually coach high school now—I am on the East Coast, and have coached high school for eight years. Always at my banquets, with the parents

and with the kids at the end of the season when people are moving on, I say, "Hey, I do not want any of you to forget," including the parents, because they might not have even thought about it, "Hey, there is something after high school, if you are not going on to swim in college." You know, that here is an option for you to keep in it, and you can compete or not compete. Some kids have come back to me and say hey, coach, I am swimming or whatever. I am like: that is awesome.

Brenner: It is just trying to connect the two. It is not assuming that they are going to make that connection, because they are going to get off and get busy. You know, it is hey, let me introduce you to the Masters coach in the city where you are moving to. Or let me, you know, as a Masters coach go search those people out who are coming into the college, you know. Is there anybody here that I should look for? Are you looking into the lap lanes? Are you offering some sort of orientation to your program? Are you offering a swim clinic with maybe some of the... you know, some participation for United States Masters Swimming or somebody on the college team there.

Audience: I am 27 and I know exactly... I mean I can completely relate. There are so many of my peers who have no clue what I do, you know. When they find out about it, they are like really? Yes, that thing exists. Because you know, I was a competitive swimmer, and my coaches never mentioned Masters. I mean, in the morning we knew Master would be swimming in the pool and started practice at like four am; but they never really introduced to us, it was never really brought-up. So I think it is very important, especially for people who are working to recruit younger ages, because they are looking for it.

Brenner: Good. I agree with you and that is why we are trying to just create awareness not only for the athletes, but with the coaches. Why would not you want to make that as an option for your people; because, you know, if they do not have that structure, so many of them just fall into this sphere. It is really happening out there.

Audience: How do you... when you talk to former swimmers or maybe those who really are not swimmers in the past, and they get really hung-up on that term Masters, how did you inform them about what that term really means and not in terms of economical raising money for the swimmer?

Brenner: Well I just basically I do not go into even an appointment where there is not a Masters program or talk to somebody about Masters Swimming. You know I am from United States Masters Swimming, but I'm here to promote an adult aquatic-fitness program. Even some of our stickers that we provide through United States Masters Swimming may say USMS on it, but it will say adult aquatic fitness program. So the sooner as that we can get-away from two things, one is the word Masters when we are talking about Masters Masters Masters, and get away from team, team, team, it is a team. It is a program, you know. It is a program for adults who have chosen swimming as their form of exercise.

One more quick fact, while we are on it. That same Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association report in 2011, it stated that swimming is the most popular form of exercise for adults in the United States. Swimming is the most popular. If you could choose one sport to do for one hour, what sport would you choose? The most popular one is swimming.

Now here is the other fact: 37% of the population in the United States cannot swim the length of the pool, 50% cannot tread water. But yet they would aspire to swim as their form of exercise. Not only do you Masters coaches have this great pool of swimmers—that 16 to 18-whatever age group that is coming and then 18 to 24 that know how to swim—but you have got this other great pool of people that would love to learn how to swim, given the right situation.

Now, the other thing I would like to point out is (we are getting a little bit off topic, but this is important), you know, name one other sport that you can learn that can save your life? That is Swimming. As we move forward as an organization, not only are we

going to try to keep attracting people that can swim in this age group, but we are going to start teaching people how to swim.

We are encouraging adults to swim, but if we are not teaching them, who is? We are depending-on the American Red Cross? No, they are teaching youth. SwimAmerica; youth. Who is the organization that is leading the cause of teaching adults to swim? I think we should be that organization, and I am going to do what I can, in my position as an educator, to try to develop programs that teach people how to instruct adults to swim. There is just not enough of it out there; and I am hoping that you guys as Masters coaches can support that whether it is at your local level or your LMSC level, or if you are on a national committee and promote the fact. That is what we should be doing.

Audience: On the adults-swim end, because I am also instructor year-round, as well. I work with 4-year-olds, and my two oldest were 75-year-olds, who had that on their bucket list: learn to swim. They both learned how to swim, and that was a big deal. But what I found during my summer-league coaching, is a lot of parents... you know I would run a program, at six o'clock in the morning for parents who wanted a swim class or get some pointers, you know, very informal: just show-up and swim as much as you want. Then I had people saying that they couldn't come early and they had work, but they really wanted to swim but didn't want anybody to see them doing it. That really is a problem: finding those hours where you could actually have privacy at the pool, to work.

You know, it is hard to work one-on-one because, you know, that is a lot of energy to put into one person and financially it is very hard to make a living doing it that way. But that seems to be a very common thread, is to allow these older... and by older I mean anybody 20+ who has not learned how to swim does not want to be seen being taught either in the water, or just flailing and embarrassing themselves. It came up all summer long, you know. It was like, I am going to make it work for you, but you have to work your day around here and maybe

find a couple of friends and do it.

Brenner: That is part of it, absolutely. Very good.

Audience: Our LMSC has already approved: we are going to, this year, at our state high school meet in November, to have an ad. We are going to put an ad in for Masters Swimming so it will be for the whole state. I ended up listening to you, and we host all the high school meets in our LMSC. I don't know if anybody else has this opportunity, but we will have packets and we will know who is a senior. We could put in that packet for each senior, three months free membership to come-in after they finish their high school. Because most of those are going to be coming out of high school, they are not going to be in college.

Brenner: Great idea. You just have to be proactive, and that is a great idea. You know, we can help you with promotion materials from the national office too, all free of charge, that can go in that goody bag kind of thing as well so.

Audience: I work at a gym and the gym will not let us... we talked last year about joining U.S. Masters, and the gym refuses to let go of that grasp because they think as soon as you join US Masters that those people are going to give you all of their money. So I've made a lot of the trainers mad because I have just dropped term Masters and done Swimming. Even the high schools, I have kind of ticked-off the coaches because I have recruited their 17+18 year-olds to come swim with me at five o'clock in the morning. Because I am here, our workouts are between 2,000-5,000 yards; we just like to be social and have fun and have a good time. High school coaches are high school coaches in Houston; they are ornery.

Audience: Just as long as it is not a USA Swimming club, it should not be a conflict for the high school kids to swim.

Audience: Well not yet. They have put me in charge of making it a USA club now.

Audience: Yeah, a USA club. As a club, you will see there is a track for club swimming

and high school swimming.

Brenner: The challenges that we have. That's okay, and it keeps us young. Any other questions back there? All right.

Well, I am just going to leave you with one other thing, one little quick fact. When it comes to adults and Swimming—because we mentioned it so much here today—USA Swimming has put something out too that it is so important that we look as an organization to teach adults to swim as well. Because if a parent of a child does not know how to swim, there is only a 13% chance—I said 13% chance—that their child will know how to swim or ever learn how to swim. It has been going on for generation after generation; we have tried to teach the kids to swim, but until we get adults not afraid of the water and not afraid to get their kids around water, we are never going to solve it.

So we as United States Masters Swimming coaches should attack it from the adults side; and let like USA Swimming and organizations like ASCA attack it from the youth side; and let us see what we can do to solve the problem of drowning. There were 3,600 drownings last year in the United States: 20% were children, 80% adults. In many cases those adults drowned trying to save their child. It's just sad, and I think we, as adults and as an organization, should do more. Just take what you can do at your local level, and if you can encourage adults to swim or learn how to swim, do it: it is going to save somebody one day. So that is what you can do.

Well I appreciate it. Thank you so much for coming. If you have any other questions, please contact me. I have enjoyed it. Thank you.

*A graduate of the University of North Carolina, with a Bachelor of Arts degree in chemistry, Bill has coached age group, collegiate, and Masters swimmers for the past 35 years. Prior to his club and coach services position, he operated a successful business and volunteered at both the local and national levels for USMS.*



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# Best Advice?

## ALWAYS DO THE Right Thing, Every Time

By John Thiel, Head of Merrill Lynch Wealth Management

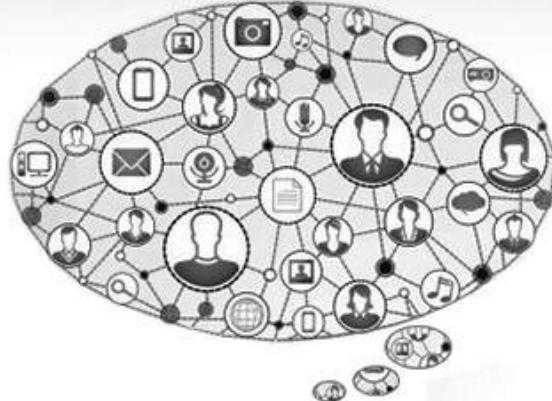
*This post is part of a series in which LinkedIn Influencers share the best advice they've ever received.*

Two people, at different stages of my life, offered me both the simplest and the most profound advice I've ever received.

The first and most important came from my mother, who told me, "John, always do the right thing, every day." And she lived by that code of conduct at all times. I never saw her treat anyone unfairly or heard her tell even the smallest white lie. She showed me what it means to do the right thing in every situation, even when no one is watching, and even when doing so came at her personal expense.

She expected her children to live up to the same standards. Whenever my brother, sister or I did something we shouldn't have, we knew what was coming next. We had to apologize immediately and without excuses. I can recall her often grabbing one of us by the collar – me, more often than not – and over we would go to a neighbor's house to say 'I'm sorry' for whatever got us into trouble. Over time, the point sunk in: You must always be accountable. Later in life I told a colleague that in all my school years, I'd never seen the inside of the principal's office. She told me to never repeat that fact, that people would think I was afraid to take risks. I explained that what motivated me wasn't fear. I was mortified at the thought of disappointing my mother.

The second influential piece of advice



**"Put your people at the center of your decisions."** – Joe Gannotti

came from Joe Gannotti, my director in my early days at Merrill Lynch. Joe taught me how to apply my mother's standards to the professional world. His golden rule was, "Put people at the center of your decisions." Like my mother, Joe did more than just utter the words. He lived them. He understood that true leaders have to earn the trust of those they're leading. To get there, you have to respect each person as an individual and pay close attention to the impact your decisions have on their attitude and behavior. One example of this is how you correct someone's poor approach or behavior. Joe suggested that I resist the impulse to immediately call a person out on the way they were behaving. Instead, wait a day or two until the emotion subsides, then put your arm around the person, take them to lunch and talk over the situation. You're more likely to find a receptive listener, and

to strengthen the trust and support you need from the people you're leading.

These two basic lessons have proved invaluable time and again, and they still guide me today in making decisions. They have given me the backbone I've needed to resist shortcuts, to advocate for positions that were not popular or easy, and to work consistently for the people I lead and serve. The gift that my mother and Joe gave me was a world of wisdom, in the guise of simple, common sense. Sometimes that's the best advice you can get. ■

***John Thiel is the head of Merrill Lynch Wealth Management and is responsible for the strategic management of 14,000-plus financial advisors and 6,000 client associates, as well as more than 200 private wealth advisors.***

# Harnessing the **SCIENCE** of **PERSUASION**

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By Robert B. Cialdini

A lucky few have it; most of us do not. A handful of gifted "naturals" simply know how to capture an audience, sway the undecided, and convert the opposition. Watching these masters of persuasion work their magic is at once impressive and frustrating. What's impressive is not just the easy way they use charisma and eloquence to convince others to do as they ask. It's also how eager those others are to do what's requested of them, as if the persuasion itself were a favor they couldn't wait to repay.

The frustrating part of the experience is that these born persuaders are often unable to account for their remarkable skill or pass it on to others. Their way with people is an art, and artists as a rule are far better at doing than at explaining. Most of them can't offer much help to those of us who possess no more than the ordinary quotient of charisma and eloquence but who still have to wrestle with leadership's fundamental challenge: getting things done through others. That challenge is painfully familiar to corporate executives, who every day have to figure out how to motivate and direct a highly individualistic work force. Playing the "Because I'm the boss" card is out. Even if it weren't demeaning and demoralizing for all concerned, it would be out of place in

a world where cross-functional teams, joint ventures, and intercompany partnerships have blurred the lines of authority. In such an environment, persuasion skills exert far greater influence over others' behavior than formal power structures do.

Which brings us back to where we started. Persuasion skills may be more necessary than ever, but how can executives acquire them if the most talented practitioners can't pass them along? By looking to science. For the past five decades, behavioral scientists have conducted experiments that shed considerable light on the way certain interactions lead people to concede, comply, or change. This research shows that persuasion works by appealing to a limited set of deeply rooted human drives and needs, and it does so in predictable ways. Persuasion, in other words, is governed by basic principles that can be taught, learned, and applied. By mastering these principles, executives can bring scientific rigor to the business of securing consensus, cutting deals, and winning concessions. In the pages that follow, I describe six fundamental principles of persuasion and suggest a few ways that executives can apply them in their own organizations.

## THE PRINCIPLE OF LIKING:

People like those who like them.

### The Application:

Uncover real similarities and offer genuine praise.

The retailing phenomenon known as the Tupperware party is a vivid illustration of this principle in action. The demonstration party for Tupperware products is hosted by an individual, almost always a woman, who invites to her home an array of friends, neighbors, and relatives. The guests' affection for their hostess predisposes them to buy from her, a dynamic that was confirmed by a 1990 study of purchase decisions made at demonstration parties. The researchers, Jonathan Frenzen and Harry Davis, writing in the *Journal of Consumer Research*, found that the guests' fondness for their hostess weighed twice as heavily in their purchase decisions as their regard for the products they bought. So when guests at a Tupperware party buy something, they aren't just buying to please themselves. They're buying to please their hostess as well.

What's true at Tupperware parties is true for business in general: If you want to influence people, win friends. How? Controlled research has identified several factors

that reliably increase liking, but two stand out as especially compelling—similarity and praise. Similarity literally draws people together. In one experiment, reported in a 1968 article in the Journal of Personality, participants stood physically closer to one another after learning that they shared political beliefs and social values. And in a 1963 article in American Behavioral Scientists, researcher F. B. Evans used demographic data from insurance company records to demonstrate that prospects were more willing to purchase a policy from a salesperson who was akin to them in age, religion, politics, or even cigarette-smoking habits.

Managers can use similarities to create bonds with a recent hire, the head of another department, or even a new boss. Informal conversations during the workday create an ideal opportunity to discover at least one common area of enjoyment, be it a hobby, a college basketball team, or reruns of Seinfeld. The important thing is to establish the bond early because it creates a presumption of goodwill and trustworthiness in every subsequent encounter. It's much easier to build support for a new project when the people you're trying to persuade are already inclined in your favor.

Praise, the other reliable generator of affection, both charms and disarms. Sometimes the praise doesn't even have to be merited. Researchers at the University of North Carolina writing in the Journal of Experimental Social Psychology found that men felt the greatest regard for an individual who flattered them unstintingly even if the comments were untrue. And in their book *Interpersonal Attraction* (Addison-Wesley, 1978), Ellen Berscheid and Elaine Hatfield Walster presented experimental data showing that positive remarks about another person's traits, attitude, or performance reliably generates liking in return, as well as willing compliance with the wishes of the person offering the praise.

Along with cultivating a fruitful relationship, adroit managers can also use praise to repair one that's damaged or unproductive. Imagine you're the manager of a good-sized unit within your organization. Your work frequently brings you into contact with another manager—call him Dan—

**No leader can succeed without mastering the art of persuasion. But there's hard science in that skill, too, and a large body of psychological research suggests there are six basic laws of winning friends and influencing people. ”**

whom you have come to dislike. No matter how much you do for him, it's not enough. Worse, he never seems to believe that you're doing the best you can for him. Resenting his attitude and his obvious lack of trust in your abilities and in your good faith, you don't spend as much time with him as you know you should; in consequence, the performance of both his unit and yours is deteriorating.

The research on praise points toward a strategy for fixing the relationship. It may be hard to find, but there has to be something about Dan you can sincerely admire, whether it's his concern for the people in his department, his devotion to his family, or simply his work ethic. In your next encounter with him, make an appreciative comment about that trait. Make it clear that in this case at least, you value what he values. I predict Dan will relax his relentless negativity and give you an opening to convince him of your competence and good intentions.

#### THE PRINCIPLE OF RECIPROCITY:

People repay in kind.

The Application:

Give what you want to receive.

Praise is likely to have a warming and softening effect on Dan because, ornery as he is, he is still human and subject to the universal human tendency to treat people the way they treat him. If you have ever caught yourself smiling at a coworker just because he or she smiled first, you know how this principle works.

Charities rely on reciprocity to help them raise funds. For years, for instance, the Disabled American Veterans organization, using only a well-crafted fund-raising letter, garnered a very respectable 18%

rate of response to its appeals. But when the group started enclosing a small gift in the envelope, the response rate nearly doubled to 35%. The gift – personalized address labels – was extremely modest, but it wasn't what prospective donors received that made the difference. It was that they had gotten anything at all.

What works in that letter works at the office, too. It's more than an effusion of seasonal spirit, of course, that impels suppliers to shower gifts on purchasing departments at holiday time. In 1996, purchasing managers admitted to an interviewer from Inc. magazine that after having accepted a gift from a supplier, they were willing to purchase products and services they would have otherwise declined. Gifts also have a startling effect on retention. I have encouraged readers of my book to send me examples of the principles of influence at work in their own lives. One reader, an employee of the State of Oregon, sent a letter which offered these reasons for her commitment to her supervisor:

He gives me and my son gifts for Christmas and gives me presents on my birthday. There is no promotion for the type of job I have, and my only choice for one is to move to another department. But I find myself resisting trying to move. My boss is reaching retirement age, and I am thinking I will be able to move out after he retires... [F]or now, I feel obligated to stay since he has been so nice to me.

Ultimately, though, gift giving is one of the cruder applications of the rule of reciprocity. In its more sophisticated uses, it confers a genuine first-mover advantage on any manager who is trying to foster positive attitudes and productive personal relationships in the office: Managers can elicit the desired behavior from coworkers



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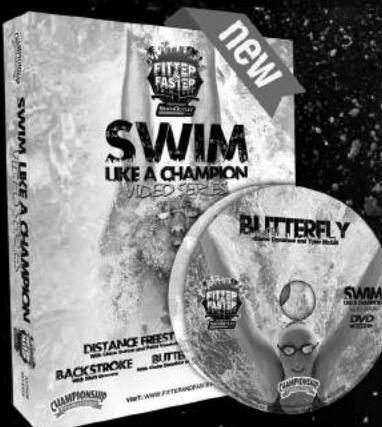
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# Science of Persuasion (Continued)

and employees by displaying it first. Whether it's a sense of trust, a spirit of cooperation, or a pleasant demeanor, leaders should model the behavior they want to see from others.

The same holds true for managers faced with issues of information delivery and resource allocation. If you lend a member of your staff to a colleague who is shorthanded and staring at a fast-approaching deadline, you will significantly increase your chances of getting help when you need it. Your odds will improve even more if you say, when your colleague thanks you for the assistance, something like, "Sure, glad to help. I know how important it is for me to count on your help when I need it."

## THE PRINCIPLE OF SOCIAL PROOF:

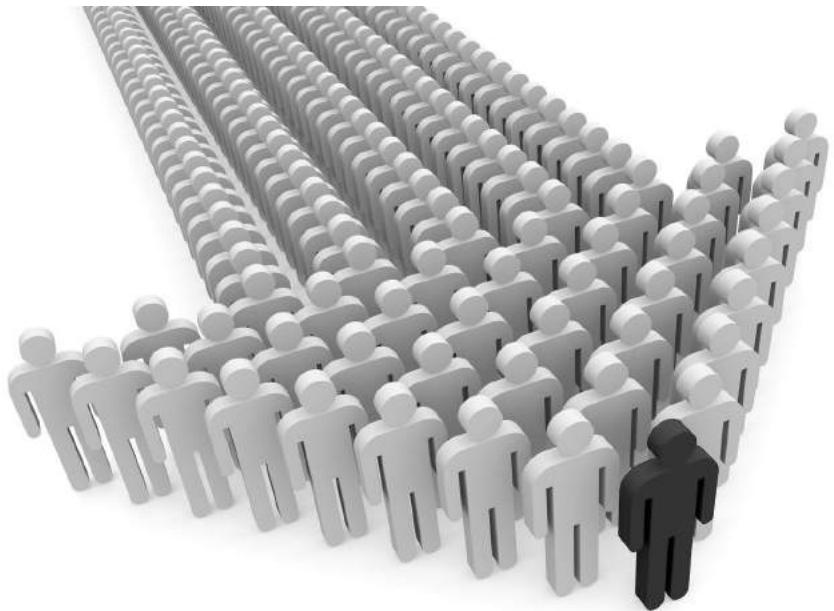
People follow the lead of similar others.

### The Application:

Use peer power whenever it's available.

Social creatures that they are, human beings rely heavily on the people around them for cues on how to think, feel, and act. We know this intuitively, but intuition has also been confirmed by experiments, such as the one first described in 1982 in the *Journal of Applied Psychology*. A group of researchers went door-to-door in Columbia, South Carolina, soliciting donations for a charity campaign and displaying a list of neighborhood residents who had already donated to the cause.<sup>11</sup> The researchers found that the longer the donor list was, the more likely those solicited would be to donate as well.

To the people being solicited, the friends' and neighbors' names on the list were a form of social evidence about how they should respond. But the evidence would not have been nearly as compelling had the names been those of random strangers. In an experiment from the 1960s, first described in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, residents of New York City were asked to return a lost wallet to its owner. They were highly likely to attempt to return the wallet when they learned that another New Yorker had previously attempted to do so. But learning



that someone from a foreign country had tried to return the wallet didn't sway their decision one way or the other.

The lesson for executives from these two experiments is that persuasion can be extremely effective when it comes from peers. The science supports what most sales professionals already know: Testimonials from satisfied customers work best when the satisfied customer and the prospective customer share similar circumstances. That lesson can now help a manager faced with the task of selling a new corporate initiative. Imagine that you're trying to streamline your department's work processes. A group of veteran employees is resisting. Rather than try to convince the employees of the move's merits yourself, ask an old-timer who supports the initiative to speak up for it at a team meeting. The compatriot's testimony stands a much better chance of convincing the group than yet another speech from the boss. Stated simply, influence is often best exerted horizontally rather than vertically.

## THE PRINCIPLE OF CONSISTENCY:

People align with their clear commitments.

### The Application:

Make their commitments active, public, and voluntary.

Liking is a powerful force, but the work of persuasion involves more than simply making people feel warming toward you, your idea, or your product. People need not only to like you but to feel committed to what you want them to do. Good turns are one reliable way to make people feel obligated to you. Another is to win a public commitment from them.

My own research has demonstrated that most people, once they take a stand or go on record in favor of a position, prefer to stick to it. Other studies reinforce that finding and go on to show how even a small, seemingly trivial commitment can have a powerful effect on future actions. Israeli researchers writing in 1983 in the *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* recounted how they asked half the residents of a large apartment complex to sign a petition favoring the establishment of a recreation center for the handicapped. The cause was good and the request was small, so almost everyone who was asked agreed to sign. Two weeks later, on National Collection Day for the Handicapped, all residents of the complex were approached at home and asked to give to the cause. A little more than half of those who were not asked to sign the petition made a contribution. But an astounding 92% of those who did sign donated money. The residents of the apartment complex felt



obligated to live up to their commitments because those commitments were active, public, and voluntary. These three features are worth considering separately.

There's strong empirical evidence to show that a choice made actively – one that's spoken out loud or written down or otherwise made explicit – is considerably more likely to direct someone's future conduct than the same choice left unspoken. Writing in 1996 in the *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, Delia Cioffi and Randy Garner described an experiment in which college students in one group were asked to fill out a printed form saying they wished to volunteer for an AIDS education project in the public schools. Students in another group volunteered for the same project by leaving blank a form stating that they didn't want to participate. A few days later, when the volunteers reported for duty, 74% of those who showed up were students from the group that signaled their commitment by filling out the form.

The implications are clear for a manager who wants to persuade a subordinate to follow some particular course of action: Get it in writing. Let's suppose you want your employee to submit reports in a more timely fashion. Once you believe you've won agreement, ask him to summarize the decision in a memo and send it to you.

By doing so, you'll have greatly increased the odds that he'll fulfill the commitment because, as a rule, people live up to what they have written down.

Research into the social dimensions of commitment suggest that written statements become even more powerful when they're made in public. In a classic experiment, described in 1955 in the *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, college students were asked to estimate the length of lines projected on a screen. Some students were asked to write down their choices on a piece of paper, sign it, and hand the paper to the experimenter. Others wrote their choices on an erasable slate, then erased the slate immediately. Still others were instructed to keep their decisions to themselves.

The experimenters then presented all three groups with evidence that their initial choices may have been wrong. Those who had merely kept their decisions in their heads were the most likely to reconsider their original estimates. More loyal to their first guesses were the students in the group that had written them down and immediately erased them. But by a wide margin, the ones most reluctant to shift from their original choices were those who had signed and handed them to the researcher.

This experiment highlights how much most people wish to appear consistent to others. Consider again the matter of the employee who has been submitting late reports. Recognizing the power of this desire, you should, once you've successfully convinced him of the need to be more timely, reinforce the commitment by making sure it gets a public airing. One way to do that would be to send the employee an e-mail that reads, "I think your plan is just what we need. I showed it to Diane in manufacturing and Phil in shipping, and they thought it was right on target, too." Whatever way such commitments are formalized, they should never be like the New Year's resolutions people privately make and then abandon with no one the wiser. They should be publicly made and visibly posted.

More than 300 years ago, Samuel Butler wrote a couplet that explains succinctly why commitments must be voluntary to be lasting and effective: "He that complies against his will/lis of his own opinion still." If an undertaking is forced, coerced, or imposed from the outside, it's not a commitment; it's an unwelcome burden. Think of how you would react if your boss pressured you to donate to the campaign of a political candidate. Would that make you more apt to opt for that candidate in the privacy of a voting booth? Not likely.

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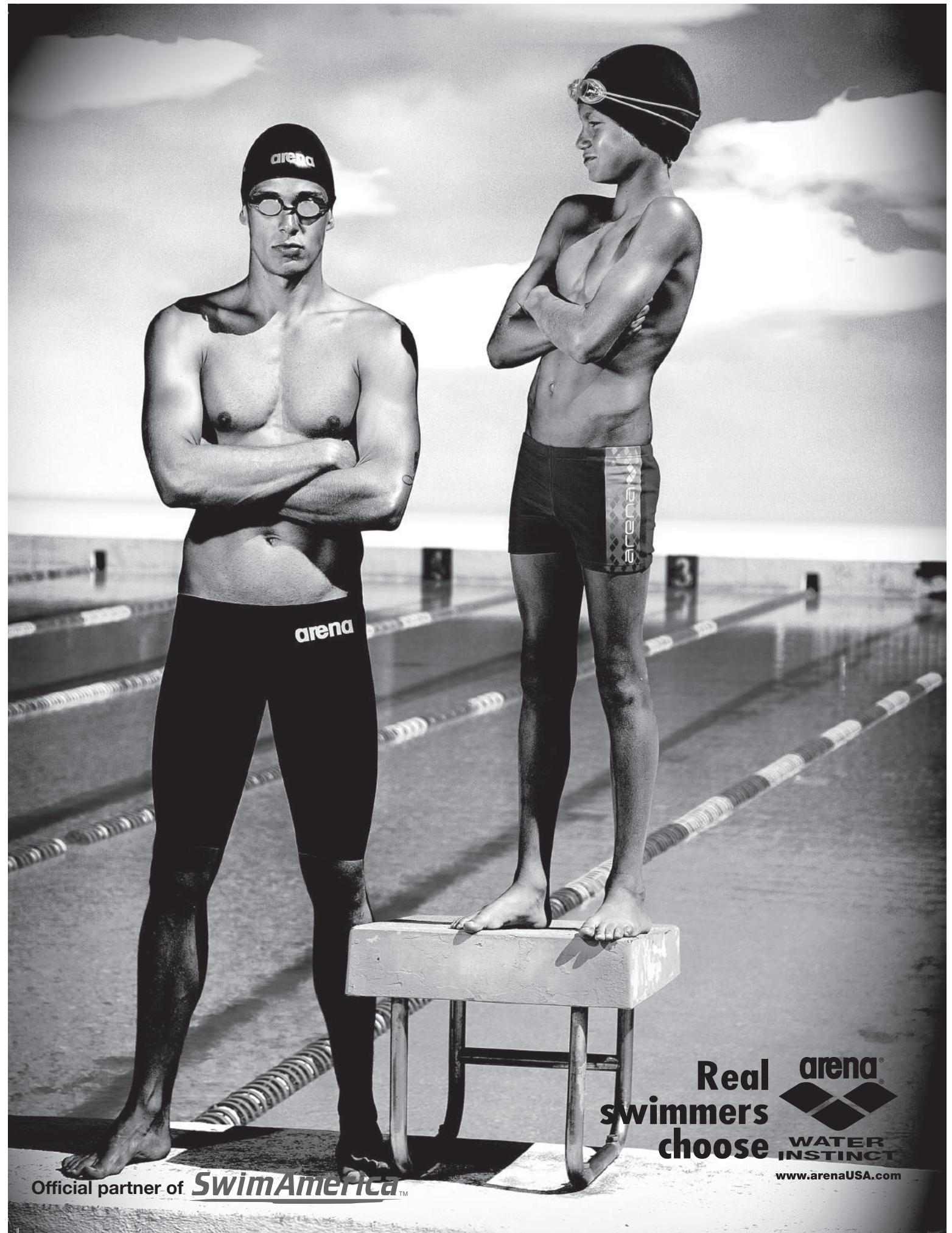


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## Persuasion Experts, Safe at Last

Thanks to several decades of rigorous empirical research by behavioral scientists, our understanding of the how and why of persuasion has never been broader, deeper, or more detailed. But these scientists aren't the first students of the subject. The history of persuasion studies is an ancient and honorable one, and it has generated a long roster of heroes and martyrs.

A renowned student of social influence, William McGuire, contends in a chapter of the *Handbook of Social Psychology*, 3rd ed. (Oxford University Press, 1985) that scattered among the more than four millennia of recorded Western history are four centuries in which the study of persuasion flourished as a craft. The first was the Periclean Age of ancient Athens, the second occurred during the years of the Roman Republic, the next appeared in the time of the European Renaissance, and the last extended over the hundred years that have just ended, which witnessed the advent of large scale advertising, information, and mass media campaigns. Each of the three previous centuries of systematic persuasion study was marked by a flowering of human achievement that was suddenly cut short when political authorities had the masters of persuasion killed. The philosopher Socrates is probably the best known of the persuasion experts to run afoul of the powers that be.

Information about the persuasion process is a threat because it creates a base of power entirely separate from the one controlled by political authorities. Faced with a rival source of influence, rulers in previous centuries had few qualms about eliminating those rare individuals who truly understood how to marshal forces that heads of state have never been able to monopolize, such as cleverly crafted language, strategically placed information, and, most important, psychological insight.

It would perhaps be expressing too much faith in human nature to claim that persuasion experts no longer face a threat from those who wield political power. But because the truth about persuasion is no longer the sole possession of a few brilliant, inspired individuals, experts in the field can presumably breathe a little easier. Indeed, since most people in power are interested in remaining in power, they're likely to be more interested in acquiring persuasion skills than abolishing them.

## Science of Persuasion (Continued)

In fact, in their 1981 book *Psychological / reactance* (academic Press), Sharon S. Brehm and Jack W. Brehm present data that suggest you'd vote the opposite way just to express your resentment of the boss's coercion.

This kind of backlash can occur in the office, too. Let's return again to that tardy employee. If you want to produce an enduring change in his behavior, you should avoid using threats or pressure tactics to gain his compliance. He'd likely view any change in his behavior as the result of intimidation rather than a personal commitment to change. A better approach would be to identify something that the employee values in the workplace — high-quality workmanship, perhaps, or team spirit — and then describe how timely reports are consistent with those values. That gives the employee reasons for improvement that he can own. And because he owns them, they'll continue to guide his behavior even when you're not watching.

### THE PRINCIPLE OF AUTHORITY:

People defer to

experts.

### The Application:

Expose your expertise; don't assume it's self-evident.

Two thousand years ago, the Roman poet Virgil offered this simple counsel to those seeking to choose correctly: "Believe an expert." That may or may not be good advice, but as a description of what people actually do, it can't be beaten. For instance, when the news media present an acknowledged expert's views on a topic, the effect on public opinion is dramatic. A single expert-opinion news story in the *New York Times* is associated with a 2% shift in public opinion nationwide, according to a 1993 study described in the *Public Opinion Quarterly*. And researchers writing in the *American Political Science Review* in 1987 found that when the expert's view was aired on national television, public opinion shifted as much as 4%. A cynic might argue that these findings only illustrate the docile submissiveness of the public. But a fairer explanation is that, amid the teeming complexity of contemporary life, a well-selected expert offers a valuable and efficient short-cut to good decisions. Indeed, some questions, be they legal, financial, medical, or technological, require so much specialized knowledge to answer, we have no choice but to rely on experts.

Since there's good reason to defer to experts, executives should take pains to ensure they establish their own expertise before they attempt to exert influence. Surprisingly often, people mistakenly assume that others recognize and appreciate their experience. That's what happened at a hospital where some colleagues and I were consulting. The physical therapy staffers were frustrated because so many of their stroke patients abandoned their exercise routines as soon as they left the hospital. No matter how often the staff emphasized the importance of regular home exercise — it is, in fact, crucial to the process of regaining independent function — the message just didn't sink in.

Interviews with some of the patients helped

us pin-point the problem. They were familiar with the background and training of their physicians, but the patients knew little about the credentials of the physical therapists who were urging them to exercise. It was a simple matter to remedy that lack of information: We merely asked the therapy director to display all the awards, diplomas, and certifications of her staff on the walls of the therapy rooms. The result was startling: Exercise compliance jumped 34% and has never dropped since.

What we found immensely gratifying was not just how much we increased compliance, but how. We didn't fool or browbeat any of the patients. We informed them into compliance. Nothing had to be invented; no time or resources had to be spent in the process. The staff's expertise was real – all we had to do was make it more visible.

The task for managers who want to establish their claims to expertise is somewhat more difficult. They can't simply nail their diplomas to the wall and wait for everyone to notice. A little subtlety is called for. Outside the United States, it is customary for people to spend time interacting socially before getting down to business for the first time. Frequently they gather for dinner the night before their meeting or negotiation. These get-togethers can make discussions easier and help blunt disagreements – remember the findings about liking and similarity – and they can also provide an opportunity to establish expertise. Perhaps it's a matter of telling an anecdote about successfully solving a problem similar to the one that's on the agenda at the next day's meeting. Or perhaps dinner is the time to describe years spent mastering a complex discipline – not in a boastful way but as part of the ordinary give-and-take of conversation.

Granted, there's not always time for lengthy introductory sessions. But even in the course of the preliminary conversation that precedes most meetings, there is almost always an opportunity to touch lightly on your relevant background and experience as a natural part of a sociable exchange. This initial disclosure of

**“ Surprisingly often, people mistakenly assume that others recognize and appreciate their experience. ”**

personal information gives you a chance to establish expertise early in the game, so that when the discussion turns to the business at hand, what you have to say will be accorded the respect it deserves.

#### THE PRINCIPLE OF SCARCITY:

People want more of what they can have less of.

#### The Application:

Highlight unique benefits and exclusive information.

Study after study shows that items and opportunities are seen to be more valuable as they become less available. That's a tremendously useful piece of information for managers. They can harness the scarcity principle with organizational equivalents of limited-time, limited-supply, and one-of-a-kind offers. Honestly informing a coworker of a closing window of opportunity – the chance to get the boss's ear before she leaves for an extended vacation, perhaps – can mobilize action dramatically.

Managers can learn from retailers how to frame their offers not in terms of what people stand to gain but in terms of what they stand to lose if they don't act on the information. The power of “loss language” was demonstrated in a 1988 study of California home owners written up in the Journal of Applied Psychology. Half were told that if they fully insulated their homes, they would save a certain amount of money each day. The other half were told that if they failed to insulate, they would lose that amount each day. Significantly more people insulated their homes when exposed to the loss language. The same phenomenon occurs in business.

According to a 1994 study in the Journal Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, potential losses figure far more heavily in managers' decision making than potential gains.

In framing their offers, executives should also remember that exclusive information is more persuasive than widely available data. A doctoral student of mine, Amram Knishinsky, wrote his 1982 dissertation on the purchase decisions of wholesale beef buyers. He observed that they doubled their orders when they were told that, because of certain weather conditions overseas, there was likely to be a scarcity of foreign beef in the near future. But their orders increased 600% when they were informed that no one else had that information yet.

The persuasive power of exclusivity can be harnessed by any manager who comes into possession of information that's not broadly available and that supports an idea or initiative he or she would like the organization to adopt. The next time that kind of information crosses your desk, round up your organization's key players.

Allow me to stress here a point that should be obvious. No offer of exclusive information, no exhortation to act now or miss this opportunity forever should be made unless it is genuine. Deceiving colleagues into compliance is not only ethically objectionable, it's foolhardy. If the deception is detected – and it certainly will be – it will snuff out any enthusiasm the offer originally kindled. It will also invite dishonesty toward the deceiver. Remember the rule of reciprocity.

## Putting It All Together

There's nothing abstruse or obscure about these six principles of persuasion. Indeed, they neatly codify our intuitive understanding of the ways people evaluate information and form decisions. As a result, the principles are easy for most people to grasp, even those with no formal education in psychology. But in the seminars and workshops I conduct, I have learned that two points bear repeated emphasis.

First, although the six principles and their applications can be discussed separately for the sake of clarity, they should be applied in combination to compound their impact. For instance, in discussing the importance of expertise, I suggested that managers use informal, social conversations to establish their credentials. But that conversation affords an opportunity to gain information as well as convey it. While you're showing your dinner companion that you have the skills and experience your business problem demands, you can also learn about your companion's background, likes, and dislikes – information that will help you locate genuine similarities and give sincere compliments. By letting your expertise surface and also establishing rapport, you double your persuasive power. And if you succeed in bringing your dinner partner on board, you may encourage other people to sign on as well, thanks to the persuasive power of social evidence.

The other point I wish to emphasize is that the rules of ethics apply to the science of social influence just as they do to any other technology. Not only is it ethically wrong to trick or trap others into assent, it's ill-advised in practical terms. Dishonest or high-pressure tactics work only in the short run, if at all. Their long-term effects are malignant, especially within an organization, which can't function properly without a bedrock level of trust and cooperation.

That point is made vividly in the following account, which a department head for a large textile manufacturer related at a training workshop I conducted. She described a vice president in her company who wrung public commitments from department heads in a highly manipulative

manner. Instead of giving his subordinates time to talk or think through his proposals carefully, he would approach them individually at the busiest moment of their workday and describe the benefits of his plan in exhaustive, patience-straining detail. Then he would move in for the kill. "It's very important for me to see you as being on my team on this," he would say. "Can I count on your support?" Intimidated, frazzled, eager to chase the man from their offices so they could get back to work, the department heads would invariably go along with his request. But because the commitments never felt voluntary, the department heads never followed through, and as a result the vice president's initiatives all blew up or petered out.

This story had a deep impact on the other participants in the workshop. Some gulped in shock as they recognized their own manipulative behavior. But what stopped everyone cold was the expression on the department head's face as she recounted the damaging collapse of her superior's proposals. She was smiling.

Nothing I could say would more effectively make the point that the deceptive or coercive use of the principles of social influence is ethically wrong and pragmatically wrongheaded. Yet the same principles, if applied appropriately, can steer decisions correctly. Legitimate expertise, genuine obligations, authentic similarities, real social proof, exclusive news, and freely made commitments can produce choices that are likely to benefit both parties. And any approach that works to everyone's mutual benefit is good business, don't you think? Of course, I don't want to press you into it, but, if you agree, I would love it if you could just jot me a memo to that effect.

*Robert B. Cialdini is the Regents' Professor of Psychology at Arizona State University and the author of *Influence: Science and Practice* (Allyn & Bacon, 2001), now in its fourth edition. Further regularly updated information about the influence process can be found at [www.influenceatwork.com](http://www.influenceatwork.com).*



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