

Robert Cialdini Takeaways

Robert Cialdini writes and teaches about human influence and persuasion. He developed 6 theories for influencing others. Here are those 6 Theories of Influence adapted to fundraising.

Disclaimer: This is not about manipulation, it is about raising as much money as we can for the people we serve with donors who are engaged, financially capable and interested in doing more.

1) Reciprocity - People tend to return favors.

Public television stations are the classic example (free tote bag). Premiums may not work for your organization but think of free services, or access to things the general public does not have access to. Example: a free special report, back stage passes, free parking, etc.

2) Commitment and Consistency - If people commit, orally or in writing, to an idea or goal, they are more likely to honor that commitment because of establishing that idea or goal as being congruent with their self - image.

Organizations do this all the time with capital campaign feasibility studies. You start with your board and top donors by asking them their interest and likelihood of supporting the campaign. As a result of that preliminary discussion with the donor, even though they are not committing at that time, they are very likely to honor the agreement when you make the actual ask.

Another example: *"We are considering starting a planned giving society and surveying some donors. What is the likelihood that you would be open to becoming a founding member of the society?"*

3) Social Proof - People will do things that they see other people are doing.

For some organizations, donor honor rolls work well for this very reason.

When speaking with donors about giving opportunities, let them know what other people are doing. You can start your sentences with *"other alum have told us", or other grateful patients we are working with are benefiting from, etc.*

- 4) **Authority** - People will tend to obey authority figures, even if they are asked to perform objectionable acts. If someone in your organization is a subject matter expert on your mission or work, consider bringing them on a donor visit with you. Just be sure to “rehearse” that person to let them know how the visit should play out.
- 5) **Liking** - People are easily persuaded by other people that they like.
Adapt your style to your donor’s. For example, if they are an introvert and you are an extrovert, dial it down a bit, speak slower and softer, remember that they may be turned off by a more assertive approach. If you don’t seem to connect with a particular donor, look for someone else in your organization who may be more like the donor.
- 6) **Scarcity** - Perceived scarcity will generate demand.
You can use limited naming opportunities as a way to encourage a donor to take action now.

Robert Cialdini is the Regents' Professor Emeritus of Psychology and Marketing at Arizona State University and was a visiting professor of marketing, business and psychology at Stanford University, as well as at the University of California at Santa Cruz.
For more on these concepts check out his book, *Yes! 50 Scientifically Proven Ways to be Persuasive*.