

7 Ways to Influence People – Robert Cialdini, Ph.D., with Dave Asprey – #821

Announcer:

Bulletproof Radio, a state of high performance.

Dave Asprey:

You're listening to Bulletproof Radio with Dave Asprey. Today, it is a great honor to bring a guest back on the show who was on about 450 episodes ago, a guy who pioneered the science and psychology of influence. In fact, he's known as the godfather of influence. His name is Robert Cialdini. He's the guy who studied influence and how to use it ethically in business. Over 40 years of using evidence-based peer-reviewed scientific studies, he's written an epic, epic book called, can you believe it? Influence, and just re-released it with a bunch of new information in it. Robert, it is a great honor to have you back on the show today.

Robert Cialdini, Ph.D.

Well, I am looking forward to it. I have to say, we had a good experience last time, I'm looking to replicate it this time.

Dave:

Now, we also, this time, have the Upgrade Collective members in our live studio audience. If you're just tuning into the podcast, the Upgrade Collective is my private mentorship and membership group. And part of the benefits, there are many that come for members, is that you get to tune in while the podcasts are being recorded. I'm actually looking at the members, they're looking at me right now, and they'll be asking some questions at the end of the show. So, this is a new format that's been really popular. So, no, you have not just me, but lots of people there.

Robert:

Great.

Dave:

You've been relatively recently elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the National Academy of Sciences, did you think when you started on this path of studying influence decades ago, that it would get to this point?

Robert:

Never. First of all, the National Academy of Sciences, for example, only has 12 social psychologists in it. And back when I started, there were none, as far as I could tell. So, it just didn't seem that influence science, persuasion science was something that would have a category that would allow me into that body of people. They told me, "Oh, during the meeting where you're inducted, be sure to come to that meeting, you get to walk across the stage that Albert Einstein walked across." Well, there's no similarities, we're not comparable in any way, but that kind of thing just never occurred to me as in my future.

Dave:

Well, it's a huge honor, and I think you've earned it with your work, which is really cool because everyone says they want to be influential, but do they even know what they're asking for? And if you're talking to a 20-year-old and they say, "I want to be influential," why do they want that?

Robert:

Why do they want it? It seems to me that there are a lot of ways you can be influential. You can influence a person's attitudes, you can influence their beliefs, you can influence their perceptions of you, you can influence their definition of the situation in which they're in, but it seems all of those occur in the service of influencing their behavior. So, that's what I mean by the influence process. I mean being able to move people to say yes to us more frequently, to comply with our requests, recommendations, proposals, and so on, and here's the secret, it seems to me, without changing the features of what we are offering them, but only changing the way we present those features to them, the psychology of that.

Very frequently, we don't get to change the features of some offer that we have, we get to change the way we deliver that message about the merits of this case. And that just always struck me as worthy of study, because, truth be told, all my life, I've been a sucker. I've always been kind of a pushover for the appeals of various fundraisers or salespeople who would approach me, and a lot of times, I would find myself in unwanted possession of things. And I would say, "Wait a minute, it couldn't be the merits of the thing, it had to be the psychology of the way those merits were offered to me that swept me. That's worth studying.

Dave:

Oh. One of the reasons that I appreciate your work so much is that when you understand how influence is applied, you can see when it's used against you consciously or unconsciously, and it opens your eyes up, right? I look at some of the media campaigns running today, this isn't even elegant influence, the way they're doing. Come on, guys, at least do a better job of trying to trick me. Come on, you can do better. Do you find that you get tired or frustrated or you're maybe a little bit bitter when you see people misusing influence?

Robert:

Frustrated is closer to it because it seems to me, the opportunities for genuinely influencing people to their betterment. So, they get a chance to seize an opportunity that really would enhance their outcomes, if we fumble that away, we do both of us a disservice. So, that is really something I always shiver when I see somebody dropping the ball that way.

Dave:

I don't pick up any bitterness in you. You're actually a really vibrant and a happy guy. You can tell you like what you do. So, I would have been surprised if it brought you there. But, yeah, frustration when you see someone. Don't use that technique to get people to drink sugar water or something. And it's not nice.

Robert:

I do try to nudge people in the right direction. There was an example that I talk about, being in an airport and hearing the guy behind the counter say that the plane was full, and he was offering a bonus to those people who would give up their seat. And he said, "And if you will do that, we will give you a \$2 credit." And everybody laughed. And then he said, "No, really, it's \$200." That was exactly what he

should do because he put into action the contrast principle. Compared to \$2, now \$200 seems more than if he had just said \$200 by itself. So, I went up and I congratulate him on that.

Dave:

Now, do you think he was trained to do that, or was he just naturally good?

Robert:

Yeah, he was just naturally good. I asked him about that, "Is that in your training?" "No, no," he said, "No." I think it was trial and error on his part, just, "How do we get people?" And he said, "First of all, you've got to get them to pay attention to you. So, if you say \$2, they'll look up and say, 'What?' And then they're ready to hear the next thing you say." So, he was really brilliant.

Dave:

Those are the kind of people, when I see them in the wild, I'll sometimes hire them because they're true geniuses, just not necessarily knowing what they're doing.

Robert:

Yeah.

Dave:

You came up with, in your original book, which has sold like five million copies or something, a lot, you came up with six principles of influence, but in your new version that's very heavily updated, you added a seventh. Can you walk me through the six and walk our listeners through? So, when someone listening to this saying, "All right, what would I have to do to be influential or to know if influence is being used against me?" What are they?

Robert:

Right. The first one is what is called reciprocity, reciprocation, the rule that exists in all human cultures, by the way, that we are obligated to give back to others what they first give to us. So, there's a very simple implication of that. If you want others to give you attention, if you want them to benefit you, benefit them first, pay attention to them first. I always advise, if you go into a room where you want to be more influential, your first question should not be, "Who can help me here?" Your first question should be, "Whom can I help here? Whose circumstances can I enhance?"

They will then be standing on the balls of their feet ready to give to you what you need when you need it. That's the way to operate with that so that you're always arranging for relationships where people want to say yes to you. And it's very important not to slap that influence opportunity away. This used to happen to me all the time, I would do somebody a favor, go beyond the call, and they would thank me profusely for it, and I would say, "Ah, don't think anything of it. No big deal, just part of the job. Just, I would have done it for anybody." I mean, literally slapping that earned influence out of the window.

And so, now what I advise is, if that ever is the case, if somebody says thank you in a genuine way to you for what you've gone out of your way to accomplish for them, if you're a part of an organization or you have a history with them or a friendship with them, here's what you should say, "Of course, it's what longterm friends or longterm partners do for one another." You put it on the map. You don't diminish it, you don't minimize it. Now, if you don't have a history with them, it's the first time

you've interacted with them, you say something a little differently, I think. You say, "Of course, I was glad to do it. I know if the situation were ever reversed, you'd do the same for me."

And it's very important not to say, "If the situation had been reversed, you would have done the same for me." That's locating it in the past with some exchange that will never exist. No. "If the situation were to be reversed, I know you'd do the same for me." Once again, you've put it on the map, and people are readied.

Dave:

Small nuance.

Robert:

Yes. This is a thing that I've done with the new edition of the book. There were the six principles, and people would say to me, "We get a lot from those principles, but can you tell us exactly the best way to trigger them? What's the best wording or the best action I can take to harness the power of that principle." And so, a lot more of that is in the new book where I've talked about exactly what words to use to send the power of that influence into the situation for you.

Dave:

Did you study neuro-linguistic programming or NLP like Tony Robbins talks about it and all of that? Is that a part of your sources for this?

Robert:

I did. And I always felt that there was so much good information there. So, the logic that they employed fit with existing psychological theory. I haven't been a practitioner of it because I'm a researcher, and the NLP people, they count on the logic rather than the empirical evidence for what they're recommending, and I prefer to be over there on the research-based, evidence-based side.

Dave:

You can find evidence that if you use the right language that may come from that world of NLP, it works better and there you go.

Robert:

Yes.

Dave:

Okay.

Robert:

That's right.

Dave:

I've got it. Yeah, I've studied, I've read the original Bandler books and all that stuff, but I don't think it's necessary to practice NLP to get people to do things as long as what you're asking them to do is the right thing, and you couch it properly. You shouldn't have to manipulate them.

Robert:

Right.

Dave:

You can influence them without manipulating them.

Robert:

Well, that's such a crucial distinction, and I hope we get to it later.

Dave:

Yeah, absolutely. I wanted to ask you about that right now, the difference between manipulating someone and influencing them, how do you know when you're doing one versus the other?

Robert:

Because you can tell, is the principle of influence that we're going to talk about, like reciprocity, liking, authority, social proof, scarcity, are they really there in the situation waiting for you to point to them, point them out to the person who you're trying to convince? If so, you have influenced in an entirely ethical, and I'm going to claim, commendable way. You've educated them into assent. If that principle is fabricated there, if it's counterfeited, if people are lying with statistics to tell you about the growth of their product or the popularity or they're not giving you an accurate picture of what the authorities are really, the experts are really saying about their idea or product, that's the manipulation, that's the exploitation of these principles and of the audience to them. And as a consequence, you lose longterm advocates who are cheated. They ghost you at that point.

Dave:

So, for all you internet marketers listening to this right now, rewind in here that part again. It's not okay to lie to people to get them to do what you want to do. What about politicians? What about politicians? What's different for those guys because it seems like they aren't very reciprocal? At least, I haven't seen much of that in my short life.

Robert:

Actually, they are if... These days though, they see themselves as adversaries rather than cooperators working for the best interests of their constituency or of the country at large. It seems to me that they're sharpshooters. They're picking each other off rather than finding a way to interact in ways that are mutually beneficial. But there's this, the great story of Lyndon Johnson, who for years, he was the speaker of the House, and then the head of the Democratic Party in the Senate, and a majority leader. And in those positions, he was able to give all kinds of favors to politicians on both sides of the aisle.

And when he came into power, he was able to produce a set of legislation that was unheard of, by getting people from both parties to sign on to it. And if you look at the biography of him, it turns out the way he did it was calling in his favors, getting the reciprocation process to work. And that's how he got these, the great society programs, enacted. These days, you've got people like Clinton, like Obama, like Trump, who say, "I come to Washington from outside the Washington establishment. I am not obligated to anybody there." And it accounts for why they were having so much trouble getting their program, because nobody there was obligated to them.

Dave:

It makes sense. It's why you might want to elect a career politician, because at least they know how to play the game and they have some chits to cash in, versus a disruptor. I see your point there, because it seems like not a lot has been getting done lately, but, hey, what do I know? I live in Canada now. Not that politics here are any different. So, that definitely covered reciprocity, which is only one of the big six, and I really want to get to the seventh, new edition to your work. So, you have commitment and consistency. That's doing it regularly, right?

Robert:

Yeah. But what you want to count on is that the people that you want to move in your direction feel a need to be consistent with what they've already said or done in your presence. So, if you can get them to take a small step in your direction, they'll be significantly more likely to want to take another step in that direction. I have an acquaintance who says he uses this in job interviews. He said, he was having a hard time getting hired, and then he did one small thing differently in job interviews, where he would go in, there would be an evaluator or maybe a team of evaluators, and he would always say the same thing to them.

"I'm very glad to be with you, and I want to answer all your questions," and it wasn't getting him too far, but then he added one thing. He said, "But I'm curious, I have a question for you, why did you invite me here today? What was it about my resume or my background?" And he would hear them make commitments to his strengths. They would say, "Well, it was because of your credentials," or, "Because of your experience," or, "Because you give evidence of being a fast learner," whatever it was. And then he knew what they were looking for, and he would hear them, because they had made active commitments to those things, continue to be consistent with those commitments. He said, now, this is an acquaintance of mine, is not a... he said he's gotten three better jobs in a row using that strategy.

Dave:

Wow. This whole episode of Bulletproof Radio, if you're looking for work, that one little hack is gold. No one has asked me that during an interview, but I can see how it would work, because then you've already said they're good, and then you have to go back to your team later. And so, actually, I told them they were good, but now I'm going to tell you they're not, and it creates a logical fallacy in your brain. Wow. That's some serious, serious power. Thank you, Robert. What about social proof? I mean, we all have likes on our Instagram pages and whatnot, but how does social proof work in the world of influence the way you see it?

Robert:

Social proof works by reducing uncertainty. We live in what is the most information overloaded, stimulus saturated environment that's ever existed on our planet. We have all these choices, all these opportunities to move in one direction or another, all this information, and it leads us to be uncertain about the best choice to make. One way we can reduce that uncertainty is to ask ourselves, "What are the people around me like me doing in this situation?" It's something that we call peer-suasion, instead of persuasion, peer-suasion, which turns out to be more effective than simple persuasion.

If you can get people to see that a lot of others are experiencing your product or service or idea in a positive way, well, you've reduced their uncertainty about the likelihood it's going to be positive for them too. For example, there was a study I love from Beijing, China, shows you the cross-cultural reach of social proof. Some restaurant managers put little asterisks next to certain items on the menu. And the asterisks didn't stand for or refer to the specialties of the house, or the chef's special for that evening.

No, they just signified, "This is one of our most popular items." And each one immediately became 13 to 20% more popular for its popularity.

Dave:

Wow.

Robert:

Well, we all have most popular models, we all have most popular features, we all have most popular upgrades. We even have most popular payment plans. We're fools of the influence process. If we don't just point to that, it reduces people's uncertainty. They get off the fence now and get into the game of choosing as a result.

Dave:

That is so fascinating. And I imagine that that restaurant put the asterisk next to the highest margin items on the menu.

Robert:

It didn't matter where they put them.

Dave:

Exactly.

Robert:

Here's another little interesting feature of it, although every demographic then became more likely to purchase the items that had the asterisk, most popular asterisk, there was one group that far outstripped everybody else, first-time visitors, who were uncertain, and they used the evidence from peer-suasion to decide. So, if you've got a startup or you have somebody who's come to you, who hasn't been a longterm customer, social proof is gold.

Dave:

Got it. So, I can say that the Upgrade Collective is new people's favorite way to learn more about all of the content that I've created. And just by saying that, thousands of people listening are signing up for the program right now.

Robert:

I wouldn't be surprised. It's a good program.

Dave:

It definitely is a people's favorite way, but that's a truthful statement, not a manipulative one.

Robert:

Yeah.

Dave:

Now, we've covered reciprocity, hard word to say, and the commitment and consistency, and social proof. And what's interesting in social proof and liking, which is the fourth of your major principles?

Robert:

Liking is the principle that says, nobody would be surprised, anybody who's a listener would not be surprised that we prefer to say yes to those we like, right? The surprise is how simple two small things could be to produce that rapport that we're looking for, that serves as the basis for everything else we do. Once people like us, they want to do business with us. And one is to point to genuine similarities that exist between us, the other is to give genuine praise, to give true complements. This was my greatest weakness all through my life, failing to give people warranted compliments.

I can't tell you the number of times in research meetings with my graduate students, I would hear myself say, "That was really smart, what Brad just said," or, "How Rosanna just, how she just characterized that is a great insight for how we go next, the next step we take." And I would say it to myself and lose all of the goodwill that would come from that exchange. And I've trained myself now, whenever I hear myself complimenting someone in my mind, I move that compliment from my mind to my tongue, and, Dave, it has been remarkable, the consequences of that, for the relationship building features of that next step.

Dave:

So, we've got to combine that with B.J. Fogg's work on habit formation. You can form a habit of taking the good things you think about others out of your mind and putting them into your mouth. And that's also profoundly good advice, Robert. Thank you. I'm going to work on that one myself because, yeah, there's all kinds of good stuff that happens, but if you don't say anything, did it really happen?

Robert:

That's a bullseye, that's absolutely a bullseye in the same way that you may have the most popular feature that you think really gives the most benefit to people if they upgrade to it. If you don't say so, if you just don't say so, it's as if it isn't the most popular.

Dave:

I really like the idea of saying, "This is the most popular," because there's a thing that happens where you don't always want to be a shill for your own stuff. I talk about Bulletproof Coffee sometimes, but I didn't get it to death on the show, and things like that, just because I'd rather shine, praise on all the great work in the world that isn't mine, because I figure, if you're listening to the show, you already know it. How do you cross that line between, "Hey, everybody, look at this really worthy stuff that I did," versus, "Thank you for all of your work, Robert"? How do you suggest people navigate the not over-self-promoting, yet being useful to others?

Robert:

You've hit on the next principle of influence, besides the one we've just talked about. And it is testimonials. So, you're not the one waxing rhapsodic about yourself, there are other people. So, one kind of person that is peers, who can speak to their experience with whatever it is, Bulletproof Coffee, whatever, and experts who can talk about the health benefits and the flavor, features that are built into it. And you don't have to be the rooster crowing about yourself. So, for me, testimonials not only should be used well and often, they should be used first. On your website, they go before you even begin to make your case, so all of the aura that comes from that testament, especially if it's an expert, an

authority, or someone that they feel is a credible source of information, that flows to the very first word you write or utter.

Dave:

Well, I'm taking notes, because I could definitely do a better job on that. I mean, I have tens of thousands of testimonials for The Bulletproof Diet and all of that, and I always felt a bit like a douchebag, like, "Oh, I'll put those up front and center on the website and all," or like, "I don't know, but they're all authentic and they're all real," but I guess maybe I have an internal thing, I don't want to over-self-promote, but also, I feel like it's worth it for people. Where's that coming from?

Robert:

Yeah, because you don't want to be seen as a bragger, you don't want to be seen as a self-promoter. It reduces your liking. You know what I used to do, and then finally it hit me? On my website, we have a category for testimonials. Our visitors had to go there. What a mistake. No, no, take a few of those and then rotate them around, by the way, to show that these are testimonials right at the outset. The first thing people get when they come upon our website is a testimonial from somebody who they're likely to know and believe because this person has a good reputation. So, those kinds of mistakes are things that I'm glad to dispense, because I learned my lesson, but I had a tuition charge I had to pay that I hope your listeners won't have to pay as a result.

Dave:

You understand why this show exists, is I want to learn from you, and also, I want everyone listening to not pay the tuition, as you've so elegantly put it, for all this stuff. Because, God, we both made enough mistakes in our lives, which doesn't make us authorities, which is one of the other principles in your book, Influence, or say your new book on influence. So, talk to me about authority, does it only come from others? Or does it come from being an authority yourself?

Robert:

Yes, it's, and you said it the right way, it's being an authority, not being in authority. And you said it the right way, it's being an authority, not being in authority, in authority as a boss, in authority as somebody who commands or can control my behavior because they can apply rewards or punishments and control me that way. That's power. It's not influence in the way that I'm using it. No. And by the way, people don't like being pushed around, they don't like being commanded around. And so, when you're not there, they sneak around the corners and don't comply.

But if you're an authority, and have convinced them that this is the right step to take, now they carry that around them with them wherever they go. That belief that you've instilled as to, "This is the right way to proceed, so, you will do well," is there with them, and they can abide by the recommendations from that idea or fact.

Dave:

I like that difference between being in authority versus an authority. It is such a big deal. And it makes me have to ask though, 48 Laws of Power, Robert Greene, are you a fan?

Robert:

Yes. I mean, there's a lot in there. But you know what? No, I'm not dissing this at all, you can't remember 48.

Dave:

That is true.

Robert:

You can remember seven. We've got seven principles. That's manageable. 48?

Dave:

Yep.

Robert:

I can't walk around with it. Yeah.

Dave:

You have to pick the right one. You're right, 48 is a lot. And Robert's been on the show a couple of times, but it's funny because you're talking about influence versus power, right? And they are different. They're fundamentally different. And influence is a softer form of power, but it's one that's way more palatable. Right?

Robert:

Right.

Dave:

And in my world, I want to know when people are using influence against me in a negative way, and I want to know when they're applying the tools of power against me in the right way so that you can respond appropriately in either one, but influence is sneakier than power, but I think it's more powerful at the end of the day.

Robert:

Yeah, often, it happens, it flies below the surface. You don't even recognize that you've been moved by a word or two that's been applied productively.

Dave:

What about scarcity? And that's your sixth principle from your original book.

Robert:

Right.

Dave:

How does scarcity come into play when you're influencing people?

Robert:

People want more of those things they can have less of. So, it means that if you can... First of all, the thing that we all learned in our training, make your differentiator prominent in consciousness. The thing that's unique to you and what you offer, often, it's not one thing, but it's a suite of things, a combination of things, none of your rivals can provide that. Set up that set of differentiating elements and make that central or very prominent in your appeal, because people see if they can't get it anywhere else, they get a little crazy to want it more. And this really works online, where there was a study done, 6,700 commercial online sites were tested by these researchers in terms of what they had used in their A/B tests to see which features of the site made the most difference in moving people into conversion, from prospect to customer.

And they located 29 different features. Some of them were just technological, like, is there a search function within the thing? Some of them were financial, is there free shipping? Some of them were designed to be persuasive, is there a call to action? None of those made any difference. The top six were the six principles of influence.

Dave:

Wow.

Robert:

And the top of those, a particular type of scarcity, limited number scarcity. If there is a limited number of options at this price, or a limited time when you could get this at this price, and there are competitors for those things, that outdistance all 29. The next was social proof. But at the top, if you're in competition for something that has limited number, it means you better get it. Otherwise, those rivals could make you lose it. And we hate to lose. Daniel Kahneman's prospect theory won him the Nobel Prize in Economics, showed that people are more motivated to get something if they are considering how it might be lost to them than how it might be obtained by them.

We're more psychologically mobilized into action by the thought of losing something than gaining that same thing. So, yeah.

Dave:

That seem to work well for the vaccine marketing campaign where, "There's a limited number of doses, get yours while you can," and it created a big surge of demand that then petered out when people realized it wasn't actually that limited. Interesting.

Robert:

Exactly right. Exactly right. That's what we're facing.

Dave:

Exactly. Okay. And then what about the new principal? And so, it's a big thing where you have a book with five million copies or so that are out there that's been very well received, won all the awards, and you're saying, "All right, I'm going to go through, and based on a lot of new learning, I'm going to add things, but I'm going to add a new principal that's kind of the highest level." What is the new principal that's in Influence, the new version of Influence? What is it? And why did you decide to add that one?

Robert:

Okay. This is a good question as to why I decided to write this book. As you say, it's been very successful, and there's this saying, "Don't fix what's not broken." Right? But I remember a quote that my grandfather used to always use, like when things were going well, he would say, "If you want things to stay the same, things are going to have to change around here." I mean, there's so much wisdom there. You can't sit on your laurels. And so, I knew I had to update, and there was this evidence that was all around us right now, tribalism. The extent to which we are driven by the groups, our membership and loyalty to the groups that we are in.

And if a communicator can arrange for me to see him or her as a member of a group that I identify myself with, I define myself in that group, all my barriers to influence by that communicator drop. I just say yes to the people who are not just like me in kind of liking principle or similarity where, oh, we share the same preference in ethnic food, or music, or comedy, or movies, no, no, we share a membership in the same important social identity based group. Here's an example of what I mean. A study was done on a college campus, a young woman was asked to stand, a college age young woman, researchers had her stand in a busy spot on campus and ask passers-by, other students, for donations to a good cause. And she was getting some contributions.

But if she was asked to add one sentence to her request, contributions more than doubled. And the sentence was, "I'm a student here too."

Dave:

Wow.

Robert:

"I'm one of you." And now 250% more compliance.

Dave:

Wow. It's interesting. The reason I didn't trademark the term biohacking back when I was creating this movement is, I wanted there to be a group of people who were working on upgrading ourselves, and I didn't want to have that authority power that we talked about before, where you're like, "I own this," but its own group. But people who are biohackers are like, "Oh, yeah, I'll do this to help other biohackers."

Robert:

Exactly.

Dave:

"I'll do this because our knowledge is expanding." And I don't know how conscious I was of the principle you're talking about here, but it so applies to why biohacking is a global phenomenon with millions of people who are doing it now.

Robert:

We're so generous. We favor the people inside our groups and we follow their lead too. I mean, something happened to me a while ago. I saw this newspaper article that rated celebrities and their allegiance to various NFL football teams. Well, I grew up in Wisconsin, and so, the Green Bay Packers were always my home team, and I saw that in this article, Justin Timberlake and Little Wayne are both avid Packers fans, the way I am. I immediately came to think more of their music, better of their music,

and I wished them greater success. They were of me, and I wanted them to succeed. I mean, that's the lever for change, and people who understand how to use it to create this sense of weeness or partnership with another are greatly advantaged.

Dave:

I really like that, and it's changed a little bit in the era of COVID, where people are way more remote than they were before, but it seems like it's working. The Biohacking Conference that I've put on for almost 10 years now, obviously has gone virtual for a little while, and we're going to have a physical one later this year, but now we've got more than 10,000 people who will be at the conference, much bigger than it was before, but the tools and technologies to be able to create the sense of unity, even though we're remote, it's face-to-face video and all that. Do you have any recommendations for people who are working on creating unity, even if we're not going out to dinner together right now?

Robert:

Yep. And I'm going to give an example that involves changing one word in what you say when you appeal to another individual to come on board with you to be a supporter of what it is that you are offering. Let's take co-creation as an example, I'm a big fan of asking our customers, our prospects, our clients, to co-create the next version of our product line or a particular direction for us to take and so on. So, they give us feedback on what they think is most valuable, also what we can prune away because they don't find a lot of that. I mean, and if we take that into account, they really do become of us, they really feel partnered with us under that circumstance.

Now, what we typically do is to ask for their feedback. But here's the mistake I see almost everybody making in asking for that co-creative introduction to our ideas, it is, we say, "Here's our idea, here's our product," or maybe, "Here's a new initiative that we're thinking about, can you give us your opinion on that?" The word opinion is a mistake. It's right to ask for their feedback, but to ask for it through an opinion is in error. Here's why, when you ask for someone's opinion, you get a critic. You're asking for that person literally to step away from you and psychologically to take a half step back from you and align themselves with everybody else against you and your idea and give you their opinion about it.

If instead you ask for their advice, they take a half step towards you. You're asking for their partnership in this process. And they align themselves with you against everybody else. They're giving you information as for your idea as to how it will be received by everybody else. And there's research to show. If you ask for assistance, let's say a buy-in on a new idea, and you use the word advice, "Can I ask for your advice on it?" You get significantly more favorable reactions to it and responses than if you ask for that person's opinion. Even worse is to ask for their expectation, by the way. But we typically ask for their opinion. It is outdistanced in terms of favorability by asking for advice, because there's an old saying, "When you ask for advice, you're usually looking for an accomplice." And here's what the science says, if you get the advice, you get the accomplice.

Dave:

Wow. One of the reasons that I do this show is to get to learn new stuff all the time and get to talk with you and talk with other masters of their area of study, and I think about what my life would have been like if I'd have had a copy of Influence when I was a senior in high school. If they would have taught this in a class, it's just what you've said right there, all the mistakes that I've made over time where you and many others know not to do that. Do you ever see Influence being taught in high schools?

Robert:

It is taught in high schools. It's usually in a class in psychology.

Dave:

Okay.

Robert:

So, there's never a class just on Influence, but it will be assigned or let's say chapters from it will be assigned in high schools.

Dave:

Ah, that's so good.

Robert:

And that just warms my heart. You're right to say, I would love to... And again, it's not about, I've sold enough copies, I would love to be able to have given those kids a step up to make them more influential in their lives.

Dave:

Well, if you're a high school teacher listening to this, you're welcome to use this episode in your class if you're not assigning the book, and you should probably assign the book as well, even if it's not a psychology class. This is one of those fundamental things like How to Win Friends and Influence People, or Think and Grow Rich or something where if people would just have that level of understanding of these things, everything you do is easier because you learned how to ask the right way, you learned how to position it. And it's just frustrating how many times eventually you'll stumble into this stuff unconsciously, but it might take 10 years of struggling for someone who just didn't know which book, which expert to consult.

So, I think your book can actually save, or your work can actually save people a lot of struggle whenever, which is why I was super happy to have you on the show again. There's one area I haven't-

Robert:

I'm very gratified to hear that coming from you-

Dave:

Ah. Thank you, man.

Robert:

... who's someone of considerable attainment in this field. So, that really makes my heart warm.

Dave:

Well, you've earned it, Robert, and really the amount of thinking and the pictures in your head that have to happen for you to be able to boil it down and explain it the way you have. It's an elegant achievement, and one that didn't come lightly, I recognize that. Well, I haven't got to pick your brain on

though. Okay, influence of large numbers of people, influence of someone hiring you, influence in personal relationships. So, how do these principles of influence apply to your significant other?

Robert:

There's a study, it may be my favorite study of all in the realm of interpersonal relationships, was done in Texas. Researchers had couples come into a laboratory, where they were asked to think of a problem that had been besetting the couple, that they couldn't really resolve, they were just at loggerheads with one another, and they said, "Well, one of you..." they would flip a coin, "One of you will be the persuader, and your job is to persuade your partner to come into line with your position on this issue. And we'll leave the room." Well, they left the room but they had tape recorders and they were filming through a one-way mirror and so on. So, they knew what was going on.

And they were able to identify three kinds of approaches that people who were in the persuader role used to convince their partner to come into line. The first was disastrous. It was the one that said, "Look, if you don't do this, you'll be sorry, because I'm going to have to do something that you don't like." Not only did that fail to move the partner, it produced a boomerang effect, and you got these people polarizing further away from their partner. It was a gigantic error. There was a second group, not as wrong, but still wrong. They were called, instead of the coercive group, they were called the rational logical group. They said, "Look, if you'll just examine the situation closely, you'll see that my position is the more reasonable one, it's the more..." And they didn't get polarization, they got laughter. "Yeah, you're so sure. Yeah, you're too reasonable."

Dave:

I wish that you were.

Robert:

Yeah. So, they got no change at all. And then there was a small percentage that did the one thing that moved their partner in their direction. It was a unity maneuver. They said, "We've been together now for whatever number of months, I really wish you'd do this for me." Or they used the words, our, we, or us, in the way they described it. And what they did was to bring to consciousness, to top of mind, the unit character of the relationship. It was a couple. They weren't going to stand still for the researcher telling them to focus on a difference, to focus them on something that was wrong inside the relationship where they didn't agree. They raised the level of the concept of couple back to the top of mind.

And people responded to one another as members of a partnership, of who we are. This is who we are. And inside partnerships, you give grace. That is my favorite example of how you maneuver those situations differently. Now, I have to say, there's another factor that applied in here, not only did the partner move closer to the persuader, in response, the persuader then moved closer to the partner's position. It was a reciprocal exchange. They met in the middle, and both sides were happy now with that.

Dave:

So, by going to unity, you got reciprocity, which was the first principle on you, right?

Robert:

Right.

Dave:

Well, that's worth adding to the book, and what a powerful piece of advice for people in relationships to understand, even if you're right, you can just say, "Let's do it together," and then you'll still get what you want maybe.

Robert:

And it also works inside business relationships where you've had long relationships with people, why not say, if there's an issue of pricing or some kind of new thing that's happening, and you want this person to move, begin by saying, "Jim, Sharon, we've been working together for a long time as business partners." Use that as the platform. That's what those people in this study did. They didn't add any new reason for moving in their direction, any logical reason, any factually, they just raised to consciousness the fact that there was a longterm connection, a bonding, a relationship there, and then the features of a longterm relationship took over to allow people to compromise and give one another grace.

Dave:

Wow. It's interesting that you brought up the word grace, how does that play into persuasion?

Robert:

Yeah, it's a version of saying to people, "Look, I think well of you, I am willing to give you the benefit of the doubt. I don't mistrust, I don't have skepticism about what you're going to do with this movement in your favor." I have a colleague who once asked me, he said, "I have a son, he's 12 years old, and I want to give him a piece of advice to lead him into his adulthood. And I'm asking all of my friends and fellow colleagues who I respect, what piece of advice would you give?" And here's what I said, "Tell him to go into every situation where he doesn't know the people there, and think the best of them."

Dave:

Wow.

Robert:

What that's going to do is it's going to allow you to give them grace, it's going to allow you to be generous with them. Not only will they like you more for being generous, by the rule of reciprocity, they're going to give you grace, they're going to be generous with you. And now you've got two people who like one another being willing to give and take. That's the basis of the best form of business I know.

Dave:

It also goes right back into game theory, where if you play the, I think, the best of you, you take the high road first, the other person is more likely to do it. And if they don't reciprocate, then you know, "All right, I'm not going to play with you anymore," or you change the path. So, it seems like it wins by all the frameworks that I know for that kind of a thing.

Robert:

Yeah.

Dave:

Well, I really appreciate you coming on on Bulletproof Radio, and I'd love to get some questions from the Upgrade Collective. Are you ready for some audience participation?

Robert:

Yes. It's always fun.

Dave:

All right. Susan, you had a question?

Susan:

Yes. Hello, thank you so much for coming on today. Your book remains one of my top books that I think about and use. So, this is just a great opportunity. I had two questions for you. One is, when you revisited your work and wrote your updated book that came out today, what most surprised you? And then the second question is, what do you consider to be the topmost applicable new ideas?

Robert:

Yes. So, the first question really is, what surprised me in all this work. And I have to say, it's how small the footprint is of universal principles of influence. I only counted seven. As we were saying a little earlier, that's manageable. I know that there are hundreds, maybe thousands of tactics and techniques and practices that you can use, but it seems to me, you can categorize the great majority of them into just these seven universal principles. And that really surprised me. I expected there to be many more that would work across the board in all the various situations, that's just not what I found at all.

So, the newest ideas are those inside the principle of unity. I really hadn't treated them before. I mean, I was aware of unity around me, this sense of affiliation being something, but I always thought that it was just an accelerator, it made the others work better. The new insight was, this is a standalone principle of influence. This, if we can as communicators, simply arrange our language, arrange how we comport ourselves so that people see us as partners with them before we begin the process of trying to move them in our direction, their barriers to influence dropped dramatically.

Dave:

Thanks for your questions, Susan. I think we're coming up on the end of the time that we've got to spend together, Robert, and thank you for taking audience questions from the Upgrade Collective. Just thanks for putting decades of thinking into a relatively short readable book. It's not that short, but to condense that much, I know how much work it is. I know many late nights I've stayed up writing and thinking and trying to condense the work that I do, and when I read your book, it's really clear that you've got a huge amount of things that you tossed out in order to have things that made the bar and to structure them also. As a fellow author, well done.

Robert:

Well, thank you. But I know what you mean about being concise. There's a great story of Winston Churchill after he was no longer in power in England, he was a speaker on the speaker circuit, and there was a guy who wanted to hire him for an hour talk. And he said, "Well, what's your fee?" And he said, "\$5,000." Well, back then, that was a lot of money. And the guy said, "Oh, gee, I don't know if we have \$5,000. How about, how much would it be for a half an hour speech?" And he said, "That would be \$10,000."

Dave:

I love that. That's like the Mark Twain quote, but much better, that, "If I would've had more time, I'd have written less," and brings it to dollars. That's fantastic. Well, in fact, Susan is commenting in the chat thread from the Upgrade Collective, she says that your audio books are great too, which is the case. So, guys, you're listening to the show, and you think, "What should I do?" You actually really want to read Dr. Cialdini's book on influence, because it'll change all sorts of things where you don't realize you're applying influence, whether you're buying a car, discussing with your spouse something that's irritating to you, or much bigger work in the world, all of these.

So, this is a core human skill that we usually aren't good at, and what we learn without structure, usually comes from being yelled at in seventh grade. We don't really have great coaching and teaching on this, and so, we emerge with ineffective influencing strategies. And this is a chance to say, "All right, what would happen if I spent the next 20 years of my life studying how to do this?" Or you could find someone who spent 40 years studying how to do this and just learn from him, which is why this episode is an important one in the library. And, Robert, your website is influenceatwork.com, anywhere else people should go to find you or your brand new book?

Robert:

Well, that's the best place, but we also have a brand new on-demand online training program that they can find in that Influence At Work's website.

Dave:

So, you'll teach people how to be more influential. All right, that is worth doing. I haven't signed up for that, but I'm going to check it out as well. Thanks again, keep doing your awesome work in the world, and I want to see what you write in another 40 years.

Robert:

So do I. So long for now.

Dave:

If you liked today's episode, consider what it would have been like if you were with us in the Upgrade Collective and you actually got to ask questions of Robert. Well, you can do that. So, go to ourupgradecollective.com and sign up and join thousands of people together working on upgrading ourselves via everything that I know and everything that we know together, because, well, it's worth it. All right, Robert, did you see how I included some of your teachings and all your tips there?

Robert:

Yes. I was impressed.