

THE SECRET LANGUAGE OF INFLUENCE

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The Secret Language of Influence

Here are some key language patterns on the tapes for your study. Practicing with these patterns can begin to almost effortlessly improve your effectiveness as a communicator.

Tonal Marking

In any communication, over 90% of the meaning in your communication consists of voice tonality and body language. Only a small proportion of the meaning is derived from the actual words used. What we say is, remarkably, not as important as how we say it. Powerful communicators of all kinds do something that hypnotists refer to as tonal marking.

The great hypnotist Milton Erickson would mark out sections of his spoken communication by changing his voice pitch or through hesitations.

For example, "I don't want you to **go into a trance** until **you want to.**" Although it seems as though he's offering a choice, it's a disguised instruction. The words 'go into a trance' and 'you want to' go straight into the unconscious mind. So the rest of the communications from then on are sorted through that particular meaning. In sales this technique is called embedded command. Here are some examples.

*"Hello, I'm sure that, **you, like me,** want value for money, that's why **by now** you maybe wondering whether **our latest model is the right one for you.**"*

*"Hello, am I speaking to the person who **buys office paper for your company.** I don't know if **this is exactly what you are looking for or not?** May I ask if **you are interested in buying this particular model?** **Now** I wonder if you've thought about it yet?"*

Negation

You can't negate something unless it first exists. For example, try not to think of blue elephants. You have to make some representation of 'blue elephants' in your mind to know what you 'aren't' thinking about. This can be particularly helpful in persuasion. For example:

"Don't think about whether it's better value, more reliable, or looks best, but decide if it's the one you really want."

"You shouldn't spend too much time thinking how much you are enjoying this."

Tag Questions

Tag questions can reduce resistance because they appear to give a choice but they lead the listener to a desired response, in fact they're actually statements, but said in the tone of a question.

"I'm sure you'd like to go to the movies, wouldn't you?"

"You can make it on Monday, can't you?"

"You were there on the night of the 8th, were you not?"

Mind Reading

This pattern occurs when someone makes a statement about another person's internal experience by assumption. It allows the persuader to send the listener on a journey through their experience of emotional states. For example:

"I know you must be wondering just how much value you will get from practicing these language patterns."

"You must feel proud of all you have accomplished."

Presuppositions

Presuppositions are one of the most powerful linguistic tools in persuasion.

One of the most important components of verbal communication is what is taken for granted or assumed within a statement. Everything you say has certain elements which are presupposed within the statement. For example, a simple statement like 'the cat sat on the mat,' presupposes that there is an object of entity called a cat, it can either place itself or be placed somewhere and there is an object or entity called a mat. All of these presuppositions must be there in order for the sentence to make sense.

Presuppositions are powerful in persuasion and influence because the listener has to accept whatever is presupposed in your sentence in order to make sense of it. For example: "If he's as funny as she is, we'll all be laughing." In order to understand the sentence you have to accept that she's funny. "I don't know if you will understand this language pattern now or later," obviously presupposes that you will understand this language pattern. For example:

"Don't be too surprised at how easy you find it."

"Before you choose which machine you'd like, I need to ask a few more questions."

"When you have bought this machine, you know there is a reliable company standing behind it."

Words relating to time sequence like: before, after, when, as, are useful in presupposing. For example:

"Before you choose which of our policies is the best one for you, take a minute to read through our brochure."

“After a few minutes rest, you will feel much better.”

Another important pattern of presupposition uses commentary words, usually ending in “ly,” implying a value for a statement. [Words like importantly, fortunately, curiously, etc.] This pattern tells someone how they should feel about what is communicated.

“More importantly you need to think about security. Without it you are like a leaf in the wind.”

“Fortunately, you are just in time for our early bird 15% discount.”

And then there are those words which raise implications about what you are aware of:

“Are you aware of just how important this project really is to the company?”

You can use presuppositions to create comparisons that presuppose what you want. This is a pattern we often see in advertising. ‘It’s so much more reliable’. More reliable than what? This forces the customer to unconsciously link reliability to your product. Because there is no comparison the statement presupposed that the product is reliable.

Learning To Use Presuppositions

The first step in becoming more skillful in using presuppositions in persuasion is to be clear of the actions, information, and emotional states that would be useful for the people you are speaking with to have.

You then need to think through a logical sequence for those actions, information, and states and then practice with them. We usually recommend writing them down, using different

presuppositions to make the actions, information, and states you want others to accept as a presupposed part of your communication.

Here is an example from a participant on one of our business seminars:

“As I am sure you are all aware, the process of change requires commitment, persistence, and the goodwill to keep giving your best and highest even when you can’t see an end to all your efforts. Fortunately, everyone in this room demonstrates the necessary qualities to successfully go ahead and make the changes that we need to make. I don’t know yet if you realize that, because of the changes you are going to implement, that in three years time we can all look forward to a more pleasant working environment, and a healthier, more fulfilling experience at work.”

Re-read that paragraph several times and list out the presuppositions being used. Make some notations on the paragraph to analyze the order that the presuppositions are used. This is but one example and you should begin to make up your own.

Finally

Obviously, one language pattern used in isolation will not force someone to do something they don’t want to do. But when you incorporate the patterns into your use of language artfully, you will find your ability to persuade improves greatly.

The best way we know to master the magic of language patterns so that they become part of your natural everyday communication is to practice using them. Most people find writing down 20 examples of each pattern is a good way to begin teaching your brain to do it easily.

When you practice using language patterns, fortunately, you will find your abilities as a persuader are increased tremendously. We don't know whether it will be immediately or after just a few days but you can be certain that with practice you will perfect your skills.

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