

## The Art and Power of Persuasion vs Manipulation – A Coach's Perspective

*The bottom line is if you don't know how to persuade and influence people, you and your business will go nowhere*

by Terri Levine

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At first glance, *persuasion* and *manipulation* seem one and the same – both aim to get other people to think or do what you want them to think or do, right? But when you think of *manipulation*, do you think in terms of *exploitation* or do you think in terms of *managing* or *handling* a situation to your benefit?

When we think of somebody as manipulative we think of someone who is scheming, controlling and calculating, out to get the best of us using whatever means possible.

**Manipulators have their own agenda and aim to control rather than merely influence our decisions. Their intentions are 100% selfish. This is why we don't trust "manipulative" people. Yet we admire people with powers of persuasion, who also seek to get us to see things their way.**

Why the word *manipulation* should receive such bad press compared to *persuasive* is interesting, because there isn't a great deal of difference between the two, other than the "intent" behind each. Think of the not quite honest used car dealer who uses his powers of persuasion to sell you the lemon that's been sitting on the lot and nobody wants. (Replace the car dealer with any salesperson trying to get rid of unwanted stock; I'm not suggesting used car dealers are dishonest!) His powers of persuasion turn into manipulation when he tells you that model car had the safest record in the year it was manufactured, implying it is a safe and reliable vehicle compared to others, even now. He then might also say for that particular car, even though it's part of the special sale the company is having, he is sure he can arrange finance for you. He doesn't mention he could do that anyway whether the car was on special sale or not.

**He's not actually lying to you, but he's not telling you the whole truth either. He is manipulating you. This is powerful persuasion!**

You can persuade others to use your product rather than the competition's because yours does X and will save them time and the competitor's doesn't. Or you can manipulate them by suggesting things will get worse for them if they don't use your product rather than the competition's and show them carefully chosen statistics that show your competition in a poor light. The statistics might be correct but maybe you haven't been completely honest and admitted the same stats apply to your own product, too, or perhaps they were out-of-date statistics relating to an older brand.

A more simple example is when a child cries because he wants you to buy him an ice-cream, we don't say he is being persuasive, we say he is being manipulative.

So let's agree for now that we would all prefer to be described as persuasive, rather than manipulative, but what does this have to do with women?

While it would be untrue to say *all* women are too honest to use manipulative tactics, there are also women in business who are uncomfortable using persuasive tactics. And while many women are too smart to fall prey to manipulative advertising techniques, there are still those whose insecurities make them easy victims.

Women are manipulated easily by playing on their natural nurturing instinct, the need to care for family, and their desire to be attractive to the opposite sex. Advertisers manipulate women by implying they will be a bad wife or mother, they will never lose weight, they will never be attractive and find a mate, and they will never be successful if they don't do *this* or buy *that*.

Of course, most women are too smart to fall for these tricks. Women who are confident in themselves and know who they are and value themselves are less likely to fall prey to manipulative marketing. On the other hand, women who suffer a negative self image, poor self esteem, self doubts and who tend to believe all the hype the media spreads about what women should look like and how they should behave in order to be accepted, popular, successful and attractive are easy victims.

As a woman, you need to view all products objectively – look past the packaging, the marketing and the advertising and determine if the product really does have value and if it really is something you need or want, and not because the advertiser wants you to want it!

**After all, the advertiser's job is to influence you by creating desires and altering your values to persuade and influence you to make different choices by appealing to your psychological and emotional needs and desires.**

They don't really care if you need it or even whether it really will be good for you or not – their agenda is to sell, sell, sell!

What advertisers fail to realize is that not only are most women wise to their tricks, they risk alienating the very market they seek to attract by the use of manipulative techniques. If advertisers were honest and didn't insult women's intelligence with their various ploys and gimmickry, and instead provided accurate information and excellent customer service, most women would try the product and if pleased, would network and share their new find with friends and family and on social media. End result – free marketing by word of mouth referral!

**And therein lies the lesson for network marketers... keep it clean, keep it honest. Be persuasive, not manipulative.**

Now, you may be wondering if you need to be persuasive at all if your product is so wonderful – surely it will sell itself. Yes, it could, if people knew about it.

**If you are in business, you have to market and advertise your products and services – if nobody knows about them, you won't have any customers.**

You must be persuasive because many of your customers are loyal to other brands and service providers and will be unwilling to try yours because (a) their loyalty to your competition, (b) they are satisfied with their existing product/service and see no need to change, (c) some are afraid to try something new in case it is a waste of money or makes things worse for them instead of better, and (d) some people don't like change in any case.

Now add to this the recent financial crisis and you have even more need to be persuasive to get people to buy your product/service. The past couple of years has seen major changes in the global economy. For some it has been disastrous, for others it has meant a change in direction

and values and survival on a different level. The one thing everyone has in common is the hesitancy to spend or waste money... on anything.

You must accept that it takes powerful persuasion to tempt the likes of a business person to loosen their precious purse strings after suffering near bankruptcy, or a house-wife whose husband has lost his job and the family is struggling on welfare, and everyone in between who wants to spend wisely.

Many business women already understand this and are hesitant to persuade such people to part with their money, and yet if they don't, they will not be in business themselves. For some it is a real dilemma.

**Women, by nature, are carers and nurturers and enticing people to spend money they may not be able to afford goes against this nurturing, caring grain.**

**We are not breaking anyone's arm to buy from us, we are simply offering alternatives and inviting them to try.**

We persuade them to try by influencing the way they think and educating them about our products and services as an alternative means to solve their problems. How are you to know whether people are ready or not to try your products because what they've used so far isn't working for them? Maybe they are ready to try something different.

You are not doing anything *bad* or *wrong* by persuading people to take certain actions or see and do things differently if you know for a fact that on this occasion, you do know better than they do and you really can help them.

Everybody is doing it: salespeople, advertisers, copywriters, school teachers... we're all trying to influence others and persuade them to do something.

**It isn't enough to just hand over information and leave it at that. You have to persuade people to take action on the information you give them, otherwise it has all been a waste of time. The bottom line is if you don't know how to persuade and influence people, you and your business will go nowhere.**

One easy way to influence others is by branding yourself. How do you determine your brand? Your brand is basically the competitive advantage you have over others in your line of work.

You need to stand for something and become easily recognized. For example, if I say, "When it absolutely, positively has to be there overnight", which company is that? "Fed-Ex". When you want to tape something, what do you use? If you ask for the "Scotch Tape", that's another brand, it's a trademark brand. You need to brand yourself that well and market yourself, and you must be believable and convincing.

In addition to branding yourself you need to identify your perfect clients and focus your advertising and marketing on them. It is much easier to influence and persuade your niche market to try your products or services than people who have no interest in what you make or do. You want to have a vision of them, know their age, their approximate income, where they live, etc.

You should also have testimonials and endorsements from people backing up your claims because some people might not believe you when

you say you are the greatest, but they will pay attention if other people say you are the greatest.

**You don't have to be manipulative to sell and even in a recession it is possible to persuade people to hand over their hard earned cash. By branding yourself (selling yourself first) you establish a name that people recognize and will trust.**

You need to be upfront in all your dealings and honor your commitments. You need to listen and pay attention to what your customers want so you can provide what they really want. You need to sell quality products and services at affordable prices. You need to offer guarantees and honor them. You need to put your customers before the sale – nobody likes a pushy salesperson, just as nobody likes to be manipulated!

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**Terri Levine** “The Business Growth Guru” is a coach and consultant who mentors entrepreneurs world wide to make more money while working less. Her techniques are proven effective, simple to implement and low cost. She is also the best selling author of many books including her latest “Sell Without Selling: Lessons From The Jungle for Sales Success”. Levine is a professional keynote

speaker and offers workshops and seminars as well. More about the author: [www.TerriLevine.com](http://www.TerriLevine.com)