



**27 Powers of Persuasion**  
**Simple Strategies to Seduce Audiences & Win Allies**

**Notes by Frumi Rachel Barr, MBA, PhD.**

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**Authors' Bios:** *Chris St. Hilaire* is an award-winning message strategist who has developed communication programs for some of the nation's most powerful corporations, legal teams, and politicians. The first marketer in the courtroom, Chris is the founder of Jury Impact, a national jury consulting firm, and M4 Strategies, a California-based messaging firm that specializes in influencing public policy. *Lynette Padwa* is a bestselling author with more than 20 years' experience in publishing. In addition to writing her own books, she has collaborated with experts from the fields of business, entertainment, motivational speaking, psychology, the law, health, parenting, hospitality, and more.

**Author's big thought:** This book offers an entirely new philosophy of communication. True persuasion is not about arm-twisting or out-maneuvering your adversary. True persuasion is the creation of consensus from conflict or indifference. It's about taking an idea or a course of action and creating unity of purpose.

Using current examples ranging from the Obama campaign to KFC, from Starbucks to the Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim—each chapter of the book offers clear, actionable ways to position your viewpoint as the winning one while also respecting the other side. Rather than turning the situation into “us versus them,” the book offers tactful ways to make the opposition feel valued, not threatened. Running counter to conventional wisdom about power in the workplace, the strategies are insightful, inclusive, and extraordinarily effective.

**Chapter Notes:**

**Introduction: The Art and Craft of Persuasion**

- Successful persuasion in every environment shares certain common denominators. Whether you're talking to your spouse or to 20 million voters, the approach and tactics are the same. All great persuaders use them, and in 27 Powers of Persuasion St. Hilaire shares them with you.
- True persuasion is the creation of consensus from conflict or indifference. It's about taking an idea or a course of action and creating unity of purpose. These skills are crucial in business settings, of course, but they're just as valuable in personal relationships.

- Persuasion is both an art and a craft. In this book you will get ways to think about and implement the craft of persuasion. Whatever your ability, the lessons in this book will help you maximize it and allow you to become more persuasive in every situation you encounter.
- Whether the arena is personal, political, or the courtroom, the fundamentals of effective persuasion are always the same.
- The 27 powers are informed by the observations and wisdom of the author's Buddhist teacher, Master Hang Truong. You can dip into the book wherever you like, focusing on whatever powers meet your needs on a given day.

### **The 27 Powers:**

#### **1. Focus on the Goal**

- People lose sight of the goal and get stuck on the process. "Process" is everything you do to achieve a goal—all the ideas, meetings, paperwork, and steps it takes to get there.
- Whenever you are trying to persuade, your first mission is to define the goal. The most effective way to do this is not to announce the goal to the group, but to help everyone decide on it together. You want to have the largest possible buy-in from everyone involved, and you get it by having everyone contribute to the goal at the beginning.
- Simply ask the room: "What's our goal? What are we trying to accomplish today?" Boil the goal down to one or two simple sentences that everyone agrees on, even if it seems obvious. There is great power in stating the obvious.
- Every group has an innate longing to be unified. Confusion and discord make people feel anxious and threatened, and unity makes them feel safe. People unify around a goal.
- Sometimes the most obvious situations are the least clear to the people most deeply involved in them. Be the person who asks the obvious questions and says, "What's the goal here?" and you'll be in the best position to lead and persuade the room.

#### **2. Evaluate Egos**

- In order to persuade, you have to understand the people you're persuading. At the most basic level that means understanding how the ego works and learning to recognize when someone is feeling threatened.
- A threatened person is not going to be open to your ideas, which is why many of the powers in this book are geared toward making people feel safe and included. So you must learn to identify who is feeling safe and who is not. You are part of the dynamic, so you have to pay attention to your own ego too.
- Eastern philosophers have a view about the push and pull between ego and spirit. The ego creates a wall between you and others; the spirit wants to connect. The ego is fear-based and usually accompanied by insecurity.

- Once you're aware of the struggle between your ego and your spirit, it frees you. Instead of being driven by your ego, you can recognize it and consciously decide whether to act from ego or from spirit.
  - When you're trying to persuade people, coming from the spirit—from a place of unity and inclusion is more effective.
  - Before entering a setting where you're hoping to persuade, it's a good idea to evaluate the egos that will be in the room, starting with your own.
  - There are areas where your ego is most vulnerable and might cause you to be defensive instead of receptive to other people's input. You need to be aware of the fear so if it gets activated during your conversation, you can manage it strategically, not emotionally.
  - Then spend a few minutes thinking about each person you'll be persuading. You're in a better position to persuade people who threaten your ego if you can step back from your negative feelings and try to neutrally acknowledge the history you have with the person.
  - To evaluate other people's egos, you can start by realizing that when they walk into the room, their biggest concern will be how you will make them feel. This applies to everyone from the CEO down. People tend to assume that those in positions of power are always confident, but they're not. No one is immune to feeling insecure.
  - Throughout the conversation, whether they are conscious of it or not, your listeners will be shifting between feeling threatened and feeling safe.
  - People whose egos are secure tend to be outwardly focused and are aware of how the language they use affects others. You may realize that you liked a person because he or she made you feel valued and included.
  - You can also use conversation clues to figure out which people are not secure, and it's usually pretty obvious. In any group, the people who know how to make others feel included are the people whose opinions you should be most concerned with, because everyone else is going to gravitate toward them. They understand the ego, whether they call it that or not, and they know that everybody wants to belong. One of the reasons they have power is because they've figured this stuff out.
  - There are different power positions within any room, but the point remains that once you understand the nature of the ego, you can be more persuasive because you know how to play to it. You become a third-party observer of the group's dynamics, even when you're a member of the group. If you can set aside your own ego and effectively manage the others', you put yourself in a great position of control.
- 3. Soothe or Sidestep Other Egos**
- In some situations you may need to deal with the egos of people who feel threatened by you. This can happen when you're a new addition to a group (like a new employee or an outside consultant), when you're dealing with someone who's particularly insecure, or when you find

yourself on the opposing side of an issue. The best strategy in these circumstances is to either soothe or sidestep the other ego. In doing so, you'll be showing those who are threatened that you are on their side; you'll be reminding them of your common goal; and you will be using language that validates their position.

- One of the easiest ways to soothe an ego is to use the phrase "From my perspective." Perspective is an incredibly useful word that implies you're going to take the emotion out of the conversation, and that makes everyone relax a little bit.
- You can say: "I know you have the toughest job in the room. I get the easy part. I get to give you advice. If it works, I get credit. If it doesn't work, I get to say "They didn't follow our advice perfectly."
- One way to soothe the egos of powerful people is by boosting them, then transitioning to your own point about how to help them accomplish their goal. It helps to try to look at the situation purely from that person's perspective.
- The most effective way to handle a big, insecure ego is to sidestep it. The egotistical person will always be viewed more negatively, and the room will always side with the unifier. If you confront the person, the group will be forced to choose between two big egos and you'll lose your advantage.
- The language to use when sidestepping a big ego is always a version of "Everyone's got a good opinion. Even if we don't follow it, we should listen to it."
- You can sidestep with "I think new opinions and experienced opinions are both important, and the best decisions are a combination of the two." That's a unifying theme, and everybody's going to gravitate to the person who unifies more than they are to the guy with the big ego. Anytime you hear someone talking about himself in the third person—you know you're in the company of a large ego.

#### **4. Manage Opposition by Giving It Nothing to Oppose**

- In any persuasion campaign, there will be people who are with you, people who are against you, and undecideds. Sometimes the ones who are against you will forcefully attack you or your position. In those cases, the best response is usually to give the opposition nothing to oppose.
- In everyday power struggles, you will always be in a stronger position if you are seen as the person who wants to bring the room together, even when someone is attacking you.
- When you trust the person you're talking to and they cross the line a little bit, they'll know it, and not opposing them allows room for their anger to die down.
- If someone launches an attack on your idea in a group setting, often you can sit back and not respond at all while the person's words hang in the air and the rest of the group comes to their own conclusions. Then you can go back to the original goal without making a value judgment about the person. That reinforces you as the leader and uniter, and it subtly puts the opponent in his or her place without your having to say anything.
- If ignoring a challenge doesn't end the opposition, you can manage it by redirecting the energy.

- Managing opposition when you are not part of the argument calls for a different approach. Remind everyone of the goal—“Why are we here today?” In doing that you’ll reassert your leadership role and give the two adversaries a chance to back off while still retaining face.
- In group situations where there is a clear superior, strong leaders will sometimes allow heated arguments to take place, trusting that the group will resolve the problem on its own.
- The best CEOs seem to intuitively know when to sit back and when to guide the debate. If the debate is starting to head in the wrong direction, the CEO will ask questions to steer the debate in a productive direction, knowing that eventually the group will come to the right conclusion.
- Whether you are among equals or in the leadership role, the main concept to remember about opposition is that you can’t swim against the current—you won’t get anywhere. You’ve got to swim with the current and redirect it. To do that, you’re letting silence work for you. You’re finding common ground with your opponent. And you’re always going back to the goal that the group is trying to accomplish together.

## **5. Make Your Weakness Your Strength**

- In most business settings, where persuasion is personal and takes place between two people or within a small group, a trait that is perceived by others as a weakness—or that you personally experience as a weakness—may need to be acknowledged out loud by you.
- That way, you can control people’s perception of the weakness and recast it as a strength.
- What is a weakness? Things such as gender, race, an accent, height, and so forth are often experienced as disadvantages in the workplace, even though they aren’t weaknesses in the same sense that, for example, a stutter or dyslexia or extreme shyness is.
- If it feels like a weakness to you in the situation where you want to be persuasive, you need to get it out on the table and turn it into a strength.
- There are very few weaknesses that cannot be turned into strengths. The formula is to think about what effect your weakness has on the way you interact with the world, to identify the positives in that, and to tell others about it.
- When you’re persuading, it’s important to remember the other half of the equation: talking about it out loud, so that the unacknowledged “weakness” doesn’t distract people from your message.

## **6. Find One Thing to Like About Everyone in the Room**

- In any type of persuasion, your listeners have to believe in you as much as your message. If they don’t like you, they won’t believe in you.
- Luckily getting other people to like you is easy—they’ll like you if you like them. So you’ve got to find at least one thing to like about everyone in the room.
- Thinking to yourself, “I like those people,” will change the way you feel about them.
- To resist negative first impressions, do a “mind-flip.” Every trait can be viewed two ways, so for example, when you flip negative to positive, stubborn becomes resolute.

- If all else fails, see the beauty in the situation and remember that everyone has a family and everyone just wants to be liked.

## **7. Use the First Five Minutes to Make People Feel Safe**

- People's egos are on high alert the first few minutes of a meeting, and you want to relax them so they'll be receptive to your ideas.
- The standard advice about first impressions is worth repeating: smile, make eye contact, and offer a firm (not bone-crushing) handshake.
- Here are other three etiquette tips:
  1. If someone asks how you are, don't just say, "Fine." Say, "Fine, thank you. How are you?" It seems obvious, but people forget to do this all the time, and it sends a subtle negative message that you're self-absorbed, rude, or both.
  2. The second tip is for women: Use your last name. Using your full name signals that you're comfortable in it.
  3. If you're a visitor and someone asks if you'd like something to drink, request water and be sure to thank them when they hand it to you. People want to do something nice for you, but not too much.
- If it's the first time you're meeting the group, look up the principals so you're up-to-date on their backgrounds and recent activities. You can bring the topic up yourself during the first five minutes.
- If you already know the people you're meeting with, use the first five minutes to make them feel valued.
- During the first five minutes you'll be making a visual impact as well as a verbal one.
- The author likes dressing differently, not only to set himself apart, but also to signal that he's not competing with them, which makes them feel safe.
- If you're going to sell something valuable, you need to look affluent.

## **8. Stay in the Present**

- There's nothing worse for a person's ego than trying to talk to you while you're checking your BlackBerry— except maybe having to stop mid-sentence while you answer your cell phone or text someone.
- These devices should be turned off when you meet with people you want to persuade. You'll notice more about the others, and the people you're talking with will have a positive impression of you even if they've been checking their BlackBerrys like fiends.
- All great communicators excel at staying in the moment. It's not hard to learn the moves: eye contact, press some flesh, ask a question about the other person.
- What's difficult is not paying attention to the dozens of distractions all around you, and treating every one of the hundreds of people you meet to that same level of attention and interest.

## **9. Recognize Their Reality**

- The number of different personal realities is infinite. Understanding that is fundamental to successful persuasion, because it is always easiest to convince people of what they already believe.
- Every word you speak travels through the filter of your listener's personal experience, and the opinions that emerge are shaped by those experiences.
- The challenge in persuasion is to recognize your audience's reality, align it with yours, and then create a common benefit that is your goal.
- You can listen to your audience. A good strategy is to go around the room and ask what each person has heard other people say about your product or service. You're essentially giving them all permission to express their fears. Take notes, and in your own words repeat back what you heard them say. The tactic is called active listening, and it's a way to demonstrate that you hear people and care about their concerns. Equally important, now you know what their objections will be.
- If you're the boss, there's always the unspoken reality that your employees have no choice except to do what you ask them to do. A little humor can help you acknowledge that reality.
- When you're pitching a service or product, you can acknowledge that you are one of many: "I know you get a lot of people coming to you with ideas. I appreciate your hearing me out on this one." Or "I know you have to make a lot of difficult budget decisions. I think this might be really cost effective for you."

## **10. Make It About Choice, Fairness, and Accountability**

- Choice, fairness, and accountability are three of the most popular words in the English language. Politicians learned this a long time ago, which is why the words pop up so often in political campaigns.
- The surest bet is choice, because in our culture choice is seen as unquestionably good. We think of it as free choice, virtually synonymous with freedom. In the United States, the concept of individual freedom is just about next to godliness, so the word choice is particularly powerful.
- When dealing with clients, offering a choice is an excellent way to present a plan. Naturally you should limit the choices—three is a good number—the choice is theirs.
- Fairness is a little trickier than choice because people's definition of what is fair varies according to their life circumstances. Yet everyone has a general sense of the concept.
- The most straightforward way is to say out loud that you want things to be fair. By inserting the word fair into the discussion, you're dignifying your listeners. You're boosting their egos by showing that you empathize with them, and that will make them more receptive to your ideas. You can simply say something like, "I want to make sure this plan is fair to everyone," or you can use words like balance.

- Accountability taps into the same emotional vein as fairness. It's especially powerful when you apply it to yourself. Because then you can reasonably expect others to be accountable too. A good way to phrase it is with the words checks and balances.
- The important point is that you go first. Then the others involved will have to either agree or explain why they don't want to be held accountable. –choice, fairness, and accountability are reliable default positions in any debate. Use them to stop an argument and turn it your way. No matter what the other person is saying, you can respond, "That's my point." "What's your point?" the other person will ask. "This is really about fairness [or choices, or making sure the right people are held accountable]!"
- It stops the conversation because the other person doesn't know where you're going. But you've redirected the debate by saying, "That's my point," and have gotten everyone to listen. You can take them all back to fairness, and can take them all the way down the logic chain to the specific argument you want to make. If you argue correctly using choice, fairness, or accountability, you never lose.

### **11. Keep It Simple**

- Attorneys, politicians, and marketers all know that repeating a brief, powerful message is crucial to winning.
- The side with the simplest story doesn't always prevail, but it always has a great advantage.
- Whether it's persuading a group or selling a product, it's easiest to accomplish a goal if your story is simple.
- People aren't dumb, they're inundated. They are going to tune you out unless your story is simple, compelling, and most of all, relates to their personal experience.
- To be effective at persuasion, you must tell a simple story that grabs their attention, makes them care, and gets them to unify behind your goal.
- In the workplace, creating a strong story is the simplest way not only to unify people but also to keep them focused and motivated. Your story is the engine that moves everyone forward. You can shape an effective story after you have two pieces of knowledge: You need to be clear about what your goal is, and you need to understand your audience's reality. When you recognize their reality, you can align it with your goal, and then you can shape the story.
- In business, the most popular story is "I will help you make [or save] money." There are other important stories about things like loyalty and satisfaction (customer, client, or employee), but if you want to get your audience's attention, it's the story about money that does the trick.

### **12. Own the Language**

- When you own the language, you own the debate.
- Starbucks so thoroughly owns the language that we order a Venti even if we aren't in a Starbucks store. Starbucks doesn't just have a recognizable brand, it owns the idea of coffee.

- Politicians aim for the same buy-in when creating a piece of legislation. The average American opposes “welfare” and supports “a social safety net”.
- Our ability to invent the terms allows you to own the terms, and then everyone will adopt your way of thinking about the issue.
- In business, owning the language means that our product or service is the one people will remember.
- If you’re message plays to your audience’s predispositions, you’re halfway home. But what if those predispositions are negative? Shouldn’t your goal be to disprove them somehow? Not necessarily. It’s better to recognize your audience’s reality and then turn the weakness into a strength. The right language can achieve that, and a prime example is the spectacular success of the Geek Squad. They truly own the language when it comes to fixing computers.

### **13. Use Emotional Language**

- Emotional language creates a picture in people’s minds, and that helps them connect with your idea on a deeper level than if they just agree with the facts.
- Using emotional language is a way to get your audience not only to understand your argument but also to feel it.
- Emotional language is specific.
- Anyone who hopes to persuade an audience has an obligation to explain his or her version of the situation in language the audience will understand, remember, and care about.
- Be concise. Use one or two good quotes. This is true of presentations, especially in PowerPoint. Quotes are a great way to get third-party credibility up in front of an audience. Just remember to edit them so they aren’t too long.

### **14. Make Sure Everyone’s Invested**

- If you want people to be more enthusiastic about your plan, make it their idea.
- Five tactics that are especially effective in getting people to participate and become invested are:
  1. Simply ask questions, staying alert to answers that align with what you hope to accomplish. In most situations there are not infinite possibilities, so if you ask the right questions, sooner or later someone is going to respond with the answers that support your goal, at which point you can agree with him or her. Now it’s that person’s idea too.
  2. Give them specific choices. By getting them to concentrate on choices you preselected, you have already achieved your goal of limiting the topics.
  3. Use their small point to support your big goal. This is a matter of being alert to everything the others are saying. Your mission is to make everyone in the room feel that their input is valued, because it is.
  4. Tie your points together using other people’s suggestions.
  5. Use their language to describe the goal. The ultimate in using your listeners’ language is adopting a phrase they come up with as an important official element of the project.

## 15. Get Third-Party Validation

- Few people want to be the first to agree with someone else's idea. At the same time, nobody wants to be the last on board. Most people like to be in the middle yet toward the front.
- Providing third-party validation can help people overcome their fear of being first. T
- You don't want to be too heavy-handed about it, because then it could be taken as a challenge.
- If you don't have anybody lined up to support you, the best way to get third-party validation is by using the Internet. Search for whatever it is you're proposing, and within minutes you'll have something you can work with.
- There is almost always an expert or an official study from which you can get a compelling fact or number.

## 16. Get a Couple of Numbers

- One of the author's favorite ways to open a speech is by announcing, "Eighty-two percent of the public will believe any made-up statistic."
- Everyone remembers one or two numbers, but no one remembers many more than that. It's worth a few minutes of research to get a couple of numbers before you make your pitch.
- You'll usually see numbers presented in one of the following ways: as a single impressive amount (over 10 million sold!), as a comparison (3 out of 4 dentists prefer Colgate), or as a percentage (the president has a 63 percent approval rating).
- To get numbers, think about successes in any aspect of your business, and then determine if there are any numbers associated with those successes.
- Another way to find useful numbers is to broaden your search beyond your own business to the field in general.
- Despite the potential for abuse, numbers remain powerful tools for persuading an audience. The key is to use them responsibly, and in order to do that, you need a bit of background on what survey statistics do and do not mean.
  - The studies you'll find when you are researching statistics will either be quantitative or qualitative. *Quantitative* studies ask straightforward questions like "Who will you vote for?" They rely purely on the number (quantity) of respondents. And in those studies, the minimum sample size needed for a statistically reliable result is three hundred. I
  - *Qualitative* surveys involve more in-depth interviewing. Their value comes from the amount and quality of information rather than the number of respondents.
- Even when you do collect some numbers, keep in mind that in order to be effective they must be numbers average people can instantly comprehend.
- Almost any issue can be enhanced by the appropriate statistics.

### **17. Arm Your Advocates**

- Arming your advocates means making sure that those who agree with you have the information they need to influence other people, either when you're not around or when you're in a meeting and need a show of support.
- You can give different advocates different talking points, but don't give any one person more than three.
- Brevity is important not only so your advocates can remember your talking points but also so that the folks they're talking to can remember them.

### **18. Aim for the Undecideds**

- Whether you need to convince twelve colleagues, twelve jurors, or 12 million voters, the most important people are usually the undecideds.
- Getting a few undecideds to shift in your direction is often all it takes to win the day.
- Recognize that there will always be the three coalitions: for you, against you, and undecided. Forget about trying to make your opposition fall in love with you. You need to get over that and prepare for the undecideds.
- Winning the undecideds requires subtlety. The trick is to find at least one detail of the opposition's argument that you agree with, acknowledge it, and then transition.
- Remember that the undecideds have a hard time making up their minds because they see all sides of the issue, so you must prove to them that you can see all sides too.
- One thing to keep in mind is that you don't need to win over all the undecideds, just enough to create a critical mass that's on your side. A few undecideds will eventually get off the fence and choose sides.
- They will probably choose the person who treats them with the most respect and proves to be the most equitable.
- There seems to be good reason to assume that many undecideds are not aware of their own predispositions. The good news is that among the undecideds, there are probably people who are already on your side.

### **19. Avoid Absolutes and Hypotheticals**

- Avoid absolutes whenever possible, and don't answer hypotheticals. They are two versions of the same mistake: making a promise you might not be able to keep.
- Absolutes are statements that include words such as all, always, never, and the prefix every, everyone, everything, everywhere.
- Hypotheticals are the "What if?" questions reporters are always asking politicians.
- In terms of persuasion, it's important to beware of absolutes because they're so tempting when you're making a pitch. There are two main reasons not to do this. One, it sounds unbelievable, which makes you seem untrustworthy; and two, it sets you up for failure. A third reason to avoid absolutes, especially in written form, is that they can get you into legal trouble.

- Dealing with hypothetical questions is a bit more challenging than avoiding absolutes. That's because hypothetical questions often seem to demand an absolute response.
- If you're pitching a new account or promoting a new strategy, your focus should be on presenting your cause as persuasively and honestly as you can, and that usually means not answering hypotheticals.
- The basic formula is to decline to answer the hypothetical and then switch to something that is true (if in the past) or reasonable (if in the future). The overall effect is that you're honest and have given some thought.

## **20. Learn How to Use Silence**

- All the great communication experts use silence to persuade. The classic negotiator's ploy is that the first one to speak loses. Unless you're a skilled negotiator yourself, you have little chance of waiting him out, because the silence becomes unbearable. He has just used silence to persuade you to raise your own offer.
- Silence is useful in other ways too. If someone is dominating a discussion, let the person finish a sentence, then wait a few moments before you respond. It puts you back in control.
- Once you're aware of the power of silence, you will see how often it can be used to your advantage. If someone attacks you or your idea, simply let the person's words hang in the air for a few moments before you respond. Silence always feels longer to the person who is speaking, so that person will already be squirming a little by the time you talk.
- Being comfortable with silence signals that you're comfortable with yourself. What
- The other side of understanding silence is knowing how to interpret it. After a presentation you might say "Judging by the silence, I must have covered this topic brilliantly," which usually gets a laugh. The natural tendency is to panic and assume that your audience hasn't understood the presentation or hasn't liked it, or that you have somehow failed.
- Don't assume that the silence is a bad sign and don't take it personally.
- If you're not sure what to say, you should probably keep quiet. People will assume you're intelligent unless you prove them wrong.

## **21. Get Physical**

- Touch, beginning with but not limited to the handshake, can be a valuable tool in persuasion.
- The obvious experts are politicians, whose moves can be studied for hours via the Internet.
- Your own use of touch has to be something that you are comfortable with and that is socially appropriate.
- It's usually acceptable to touch a colleague on the hand, forearm, shoulder, or upper back.
- In general, the person who initiates the touching is asserting power.
- You don't need to touch someone a lot in order to establish that you're open to friendship. One light touch on the arm while you're making a point is all it takes.

## **22. Don't Say No, Say "Let's Try This"**

- When you're dealing with clients, you really can't say no if you want to keep the business.
- You must satisfy them and at the same time persuade them not to pursue ideas that would be bad for their cause.
- CEOs don't like to hear the word no any more than the rest of us do. No is a rejection. Say no, and you've just made your client feel stupid. You've also given the impression that you don't care about your client's goal.
- Instead of saying no, take the conversation back to the goal and suggest alternate ways to achieve it. If you keep the goal as your touchstone, you'll have safe common ground you can return to. From that place of unity, you can change the process together.
- Even the little things count when you're trying to present a generally positive face to the world. Before you hit the send button on your emails, reread them and try to eliminate the word no whenever you (reasonably) can. It usually takes only a few seconds to rephrase the message in a positive way.

## **23. Release Bad News Quickly and Good News Slowly**

- A large part of persuasion has to do with how you manage facts, especially when the facts could damage your reputation.
- The longer a story drags out, the worse it is for whoever is at the eye of the storm. If you can get all the details of a bad story out in one day, there's a good chance it will blow over because there will be nothing for the media to follow up with.
- It's crucial to understand how to release the facts in a way that will create the perception that supports your position.
- The reverse is also true: If you've got good news, release it slowly and as piecemeal as you can, because the cumulative effect is much more powerful.
- In terms of bad news, consider how your employees would react if you told them all the negatives at once.
- If there's a way to release positive client feedback slowly, the effect will be greater and the glow will last longer. It's counterintuitive, because we all have a natural tendency to spread good news the minute we hear it and to minimize bad news. If we can learn to do the opposite, we can have more control over the way the people around us perceive the facts.

## **24. Challenge Bad Ideas by Challenging the Details**

- Occasionally you need to persuade people not to do something you think is a bad idea. The most effective method is to agree with the larger concept, then challenge the details.
- When challenging bad ideas in the workplace, your first task is to identify the big-picture concept that you agree with. Then talk about how the specifics would not accomplish the larger goal. Offer a legitimate alternative, which is always the best approach if you can manage it.

- This is an important lesson to remember when someone is trying to kill your idea with details. Don't get drawn into the argument, because what is there to say? They think the details are flawed (or that's the position they're taking) and you do not. Rather than squabble, briefly agree to disagree. Then transition back to the goal and point to all the credible third-party advocates who support you.

## **25. Play Devil's Advocate**

- Challenging a bad idea by challenging the details is a strategy for completely halting a dubious plan. Playing devil's advocate is a different technique, one that can be used either to deflate someone else's proposal or to locate weaknesses in your own idea.
- Whenever you present a plan, there's a chance someone will voice doubts. Instead of getting defensive, you can say, "That's a fair point. Want to play devil's advocate? We can try to get a handle on potential problems sooner rather than later." Now you're all on the same side, and the doubter has a specific role in the discussion.
- As a nice side benefit, asking someone to play devil's advocate will show the undecideds in the room that you're open-minded, which will help sway them in your direction.
- Knowing how to play devil's advocate is also crucial when defending various aspects of your plan against people who want to alter it.
- Playing devil's advocate is solution-driven and direct. By playing devil's advocate you are getting disagreements out in the open and letting everyone know exactly what your concerns are.
- Avoid saying "I don't disagree with you, but..." It's much more productive to say, "Is it okay if I play devil's advocate? I want to anticipate any snags. Whatever disagreements we have will only help us create a more airtight strategy."

## **26. Don't Change, "Adapt"**

- In business as well as politics, outside events are what usually forces change. It could be new technology, or a turn in the economy.
- If you're in charge, you need to persuade your team to follow you to the next stage and not panic or jump ship.
- First, take everyone back to the founding goal of the organization. Then have the group help you decide how the message should evolve, while still supporting the original mission. When everyone has contributed, you will have the unity you need to start moving in the new direction.
- The key lies in giving ownership of the changed message to the group, and also in personally accepting responsibility for whatever problems there were with the original message or strategy. Share the credit and assume the blame—in other words, keep your ego out of it and make sure everyone else's ego is soothed and safe.

- Where change gets more complicated in both politics and business is in presenting the new, evolved candidate or product to the voter or consumer.
- With a product or service, the trick is to make the new version seem like a natural evolution of the original. What often helps bridge the gap is one of the three reliable concepts—choice, fairness, and accountability. If you’re offering one of those, change becomes much more appealing.

## **27. Be Your Own Pundit**

- While you need to read the book in order to start using them, the way to get really good at the powers is to review them after a meeting, sales pitch, speech, presentation, or even a simple conversation with your spouse.
- The twenty-seventh power of persuasion is to reflect on the other twenty-six powers when a persuasion experience is fresh in your mind. That’s when your learning curve will be the steepest.
- Be your own pundit. Review both your successes and your failures, and try to figure out what worked and what didn’t.

### **Here is a list of performance tips you can use whenever you’re persuading:**

- Know your message—the thirty-second story.
- Relax and breathe.
- If you need to fidget, wiggle your toes.
- Don’t clench your hands.
- Don’t assume the others in the room understand your profession.
- Don’t talk over their heads. Explain your terms.
- Don’t use acronyms unless the group knows what they mean.
- Let others finish a question before you start to answer.
- When you answer, look at the person asking the question.
- If you don’t understand a question, ask for clarification. It’s better to play ignorant and seem like a quick learner than to pretend to know something that you don’t.
- If you need to think about an answer, cast your eyes down, not up. Looking down appears thoughtful; looking up seems like you’re searching.
- It’s okay to pause when you’re giving a presentation. To the speaker, a pause can feel like confusion, but to the audience a pause appears thoughtful.
- Silence is better than “hmm,” “uh huh,” or “you know.”
- In one-on-one meetings, if it’s appropriate, end with touch—a handshake, a pat on the back, a hug. It’s inclusive and reassuring.

**Recommendation:** There is lots of wisdom in this book. The 27 powers are informed by the observations and wisdom of St. Hilaire’s Buddhist teacher, Master Hang Truong, a man who has had a

profound influence on him. You can dip into the book wherever you like, focusing on whatever powers meet your needs on a given day.

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**About the reviewer: Frumi Rachel Barr, MBA, PhD**

Many CEO's find themselves asking "What now?" to sensitive situations that only an experienced former CEO can understand. Frumi is brought in to solve problems and often remains to work with you, as your confidante and secret weapon. She has an uncanny knack of getting to the heart of your corporate climate and maximizing your team's performance, profitability and sustainability.

To schedule a free *Break From the Pack to Success* consultation email [ceocondfidante@frumi.com](mailto:ceocondfidante@frumi.com) or call 949-729-1577