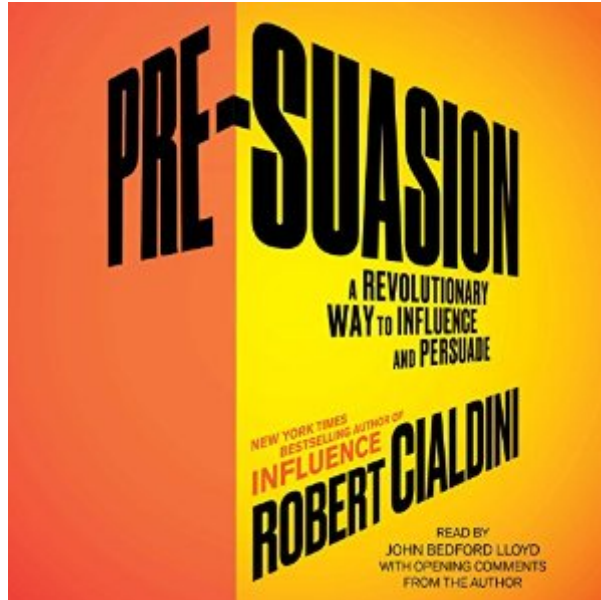


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# Pre-Suasion: Channeling Attention For Change



## Synopsis

The author of the legendary best seller *Influence*, social psychologist Robert Cialdini, shines a light on effective persuasion and reveals that the secret doesn't lie in the message itself but in the key moment before that message is delivered. What separates effective communicators from truly successful persuaders? Using the same combination of rigorous scientific research and accessibility that made his *Influence* an iconic best seller, Robert Cialdini explains how to capitalize on the essential window of time before you deliver an important message. This "privileged moment for change" prepares people to be receptive to a message before they experience it. Optimal persuasion is achieved only through optimal pre-suasion. In other words, to change minds, a pre-suader must also change states of mind. His first solo work in over 30 years, Cialdini's *Pre-Suasion* draws on his extensive experience as the most cited social psychologist of our time and explains the techniques a person should implement to become a master persuader. Altering a listener's attitudes, beliefs, or experiences isn't necessary, says Cialdini - all that's required is for a communicator to redirect the audience's focus of attention before a relevant action. From studies on advertising imagery to treating opiate addiction, from the annual letters of Berkshire Hathaway to the annals of history, Cialdini draws on an array of studies and narratives to outline the specific techniques you can use on online marketing campaigns and even effective wartime propaganda. He illustrates how the artful diversion of attention leads to successful pre-suasion and gets your targeted audience primed and ready to say yes.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I am among those who have waited more than three decades since Robert Cialdini's classic, *Influence*, was first published in 1984 but updated since. It remains the definitive source for what is now referred to as the psychology of persuasion. When he was asked why it took him so long to write another, he replied, "I never had an idea big enough. I didn't want to plant a set of bushes around the tree that is *Influence*. I wanted to plant another tree." Indeed he has. Most of the best works of non-fiction are evidence-driven and that is certainly true of this one: 91 pages are devoted to Cialdini's references and another 67 pages are devoted to his notes. The Lincoln comment about sharpening an axe helps to explain why Cialdini wrote *Pre-Suasion*. Obviously, Lincoln stresses the importance of preparation as does Sun Tzu in *Art of War* when asserting that every battle is won or lost before it is fought. Cialdini focuses the preparation for what he characterizes as "privileged moments." That is, identifiable points in time when an individual is particularly receptive to a communicator's message. With all due respect to mastering the skills when acting on the six principles that Cialdini discusses in *Influence*, it is nonetheless imperative to apply them when they will be most effective: during a privileged moment, when channeled attention can lead to pre-suasion. All this is thoroughly explained in Chapter 3. These are among the dozens of passages of greatest interest and value to me, also listed to suggest the scope of Cialdini's coverage:

- o Pre-suasion (Pages 3-18)
- o Privileged moments (14-15 and 19-30)
- o Magnetizers (15-16 and 89-92)
- o Attention (31-50)
- o Causality (51-66)
- o Attractions (67-81)
- o Violence (70-71 and 74-75)
- o Lack of closure (86-89)
- o Associations (99-115)
- o Geographies of influence (116-131)
- o Work environments (118-119)
- o Stereotypes of women (129-131)
- o Correction against influence (141-145)
- o Authority (152-153)
- o Reciprocation (153-157)
- o Liking (158-160)
- o Acknowledging weaknesses (165-167 and 180-181)
- o Warren Buffett (178-191)
- o Holocaust (182-191)
- o Strong commitments (224-227)
- o Geographies and post-suasion (224-233)

In the final chapter, Cialdini suggests that "when members of an audience favor the given action or idea proposed, when they have become temporarily convinced there's a very important question to be confronted: 'When rival communicators or even every day events divert their attention to some other concept, what can be done to prevent the favorability from evaporating?' As the Brothers Heath (Chip and Dan) would phrase it, 'How to prepare and then deliver a message that will stick?' Cialdini's response to the question is to provide follow-up reminders or cues." He cites several examples of how this has been done, how commitments have been obtained, usually in the form of related behavior. Details are best revealed in the narrative, in context. However, it would not be providing a

to say that a presentation can be temporarily persuasive as is usually the case, for example, when presidential candidates accept their party's nomination but only follow-up initiatives can sustain its appeal. In this book and in its predecessor, *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion*, Robert Cialdini thoroughly explains HOW.

Which messages cause people to comply? Robert Cialdini's new book addresses this question. *Pre-Suasion* is a revolutionary way to influence and persuade. Pre-suasion operates by creating favorable conditions a few moments before trying to influence. This is a powerful book, and not without its ethical concerns. I'll get to that in a minute. A conjurer intentionally misdirects an audience's attention. Dr. Cialdini explains how attention works, how it can get diverted, and how it can be maintained. There is such a thing as a geography of persuasion. Cues in the environment subliminally influence our future actions. Control those cues and you're much more likely to persuade. *Pre-Suasion* is filled with examples of how this works. Dr. Cialdini's book, *Influence*, was published over thirty years ago, and has now sold over three million copies. At that time, he made the case for how readers can become aware of how they are being manipulated, rather than advocating use of the book for unethical practices. *Pre-Suasion* poses more of a problem. An uncomfortable truth is that many people will cheat if they think they won't get caught. Dr. Cialdini cites a pair of global surveys that revealed how uncomfortably large numbers of senior business leaders know of the value of their company's reputation, yet if they feel they can get away with it, they will behave unethically. He writes, "It's therefore a legitimate concern that publication of the information might enlighten certain unethical organizations about how to trick people into assent more effectively." This makes *Pre-Suasion* a dangerous book. Dr. Cialdini attempts to soften this harsh reality by showing data on how dishonesty undermines organizational profits. There are no easy answers here. I didn't expect this to be such a page-turner. Dr. Cialdini has written a lively and engaging book. It's a tour through social psychology. There is new research here on persuasion science. It's a more accessible read than Daniel Kahneman's *Thinking Fast and Slow*, and more comprehensive than Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein's *Nudge*. If you like these books, you'll find *Pre-Suasion* a worthwhile read. Yet much of the material here is well-trodden ground for social psychologists. What made it hard to put down are the personal stories. They are always relevant, and often funny. He tells of a pyramid scheme operation where he was given the sales pitch during a long bus trip: an environment controlled to produce foggy decision making. Readers get a feel for learning from a real human being, rather than encountering

dry and abstract research. Dr. Cialdini tells of his struggle to write for a general audience in academic surroundings. The cues around him kept him coming back to an academic style. When he switched to his home office, the images and objects around him influenced his writing to be better suited to a general audience. For example, on the topic of email spam, this was probably not written in his university office: "I, for instance have been flattered to learn through repeated Internet messages that many Ukrainian virgin prostitutes want to meet me; if that can't be arranged, they can get me an outstanding deal on reconditioned printer cartridges." The objective is to direct attention. For example, publicizing data on pollution has more effect than fining companies. Corporations can easily pay fines, but have trouble with attention focused on their wrongdoing and the resulting social perception. Before reading this book I wasn't looking out for environmental cues. If you want somebody to feel warmth toward you, first (pre-suasively) let them hold a warm drink for a while. If you want to impress someone on the seriousness of your communication, get them to hold a heavy object. This way they have to make an effort to hold it. That effort is associated with the effort they need to focus on your message. We talk of "paying attention." And this is an often unrecognized fact: attention requires energy. Talk is cheap. But getting a person to actively engage can reap large rewards. Even the smallest of voluntary acts can make a difference. Commitment to a new behavior comes about not just through reminders but active engagement. In one instance, Dr. Cialdini, writes of how dental patients improved their appointment commitments when they filled out a reminder card, instead of the dental office employee doing it. This simple act made the future commitment easier to keep. This book offers an in-depth learning experience. I'll be returning to it often. The research is impressive. The book delivers the promise of learnable skills. Pre-Suasion depends upon developing an awareness of human associations, clarity of what you want, formulating your question, and asking it at the right time. Note: I did receive an advance copy from the publisher. Disclaimer: Christopher Richards is a business book ghostwriter and has no affiliation with the author of this book.

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