

Want more sales? 10 lessons in the art of persuasion

There's no doubt that the art of persuasion has a critical place in real estate sales. Here's what agents can learn from bestselling author Daniel Pink's MasterClass on sales and persuasion



Photo_Concepts via Getty Images

BY [AMIE QUIRARTE](#)
April 03, 2021

We want to help you make more money — right now. All month, go [Back to Basics](#) with Inman as real estate pros share what's working now and how they're setting up to profit in a post-pandemic world.



Being that I am a mother, a wife, oh, and a real estate agent, sales and persuasion are two critical factors in my life. Recently, a friend sent me the link to [Daniel Pink's MasterClass](#) and asked for my opinion. My initial thoughts? Well,

I had never done a MasterClass, nor had I ever heard of Daniel Pink. But my friend gave it a glowing review — so I signed up.

I went in with minor-to-moderate expectations but walked away feeling as if I had just completed a semester at Harvard based solely on persuasion and sales. I have highlighted and summarized the pieces that spoke the loudest to me because I think we can all benefit from Pink's knowledge.

Lesson No. 1: People are going to say 'no' more times than they say 'yes'

This sounds like a rudimentary assessment, but this is a powerful lesson to sit with. As human beings, we hate [the feeling of rejection](#), but it exists all around us — in every realm and in all capacities. The sooner we acknowledge this fundamental part of life, the sooner we can learn to find acceptance in it.

How many times have you heard “no” in real estate? Have you allowed yourself to wallow in it, to feel bad about yourself because of it, to start a self-shame spiral?

What if we change the narrative? The next time someone tells you “no,” remind yourself that you will always hear “no” more than you hear “yes.”

Lesson No. 2: No matter what your job title is, you're selling. Sales is not a bad word!

Daniel Pink shares a study that concludes 40 percent of people's primary and day-to-day work lives [include some form of selling](#) or persuasion. That equates to 24 minutes of every hour. If you are a boss, you are trying to influence and

persuade your employees. If you are a teacher, you're trying to persuade your class. The list goes on.

Your job skills are elastic, especially in real estate, and this requires you to have a broader range of skills and be more versatile. Within that range should be the skill of persuasion.

A survey of 5,000 Americans was done, and the results were — well, I guess they were what you would expect. The researchers asked participants this question: “When you think of sales or selling, what is the first word that comes to mind?”

The researchers were left with 25 of the most commonly used ways to describe someone in sales. Of those 25, 20 were negative. The most common answer was [overwhelmingly “pushy.”](#)

The vast majority of people have a very negative attitude towards sales or selling. This is something we're likely familiar with, but we try to tell ourselves it's different with us.

If the vast majority of the American public thinks salespeople are too pushy, how can we be more aware of that when we approach new clients and new situations? How can we better prepare ourselves to address the preconceived notions someone may have about us before we even step into the room?

Lesson No. 3: Be aware of information asymmetry

Ask yourself this: Do you live in a world with information asymmetry? Our notion of persuasion has changed more in the last 10 years than it has in the previous 100 to 1,000 years. Access to information is the reason sales today are not what they once were.

For most of our commercial lives, the seller has always had more information than the buyer. When the seller has more information than the buyer, the seller has the vantage point and takes advantage of the buyer. This is the [root of “buyer beware.”](#)

About 10 years ago, thanks mainly to the spread of the internet, buyers started to have a wealth of information available at their fingertips. How has this changed the landscape with your buyers and sellers?

Lesson No. 4: Attune ourselves to others

Learn to take someone else's perspective and see the world through their eyes instead of our own. Accept the basic fact that we can't force people to do things.

The way that we can move people is to find common ground. We must work to understand where others are coming from and to find something that works for you and for them.

Try this exercise. There are three straightforward instructions, and there is no need to overcomplicate them.

Identify your dominant hand

With your dominant hand, snap your fingers five times very quickly.

On your forehead, draw for me a capital E.

There are two different ways to draw the E — facing me or facing you. If I drew the E so I can read it, I'm taking my perspective. If I drew it so you can see it, I'm taking your viewpoint.

You want to take a perspective that is not your own so you can honor someone else's point of view. This isn't something that comes natural for most people. Doing this will allow you to become a better persuader because you will understand where the other person is coming from.

There is an inverse relationship between feelings of power and perspective-taking. The more powerful you feel, the worse you get at perspective-taking.

People who are low in status and lacking in power are excellent perspective-takers. People who are high-status and high-powered are typically terrible perspective-takers. More often than not, high-powered individuals don't see the world from other people's points of view.

Power has distorted the way they see other people, [which gets a lot of leaders](#) in trouble. There is a counterintuitive solution to this problem: Reduce your feelings of power to increase your ability to take someone else's perspective.

For example, if I'm the boss and I tell you to do something (it isn't illegal), but you don't think it is a good idea, you might subtly say you don't feel comfortable doing it. When you push back, I feel frustrated and exert my power, saying, "Hey, we need to do it this way." I get resistance, and I want to increase my feelings of control.

Instead, we should think about power as a dial. Our instinct when feeling threatened is to increase our feelings of power. Pinker suggests that a better strategy is to turn the dial the other way. Decrease your power. *Do* something you're resisting.

When employees tell you and say they don't feel comfortable doing what you requested, turn your dial down, and lean into what they're saying. Chances are, there is a good reason for their hesitation. [Hear them out.](#)

Lesson No. 5: Turn your selling into serving

Make it personal, and make it purposeful. Think about how your selling is going to improve a single life. What we do as persuaders or sellers is to serve other people. If we think about our sales as a service, we will do better and do bigger things.

Lesson No. 6: Clarity

Expertise was once defined as having access to privileged information. With endless amounts of data available, we must work toward moving from accessed data to the ability to curate information. We need to move [from problem-solving](#) to problem-finding.

If your customers know what their problems are, they can often find the solution without you. They need you when they don't know what their problem is or when they're wrong about what it could be.

The goal isn't to do something to someone else. It's setting up a situation in which the other person can do something for themselves. That's a more effective way of persuading someone.

When human beings have their own way of doing something or the decision-making power about doing it, they are more likely to believe in doing it. Persuasion is not a magical thing we do to manipulate people. We are changing the context and helping people summon their reasons for doing it.

One way to look at persuasion is to think about the difference between *irritation* and *agitation*. Irritation is getting someone to do something that you want them to do. Agitation is something that they ought to do and ultimately want to do. They help people understand the context they are in.

You can irritate your colleague by controlling; You want them to do things their way all of the time. The idea is to ask more questions to agitate (what would you think if we did X, Y or Z. What do you think is the best way?).

Agitating is making someone a little uneasy, but it is a more effective form of sparking their behavior. Irritation is leading with your mouth. Agitation is leading with your ears.

Lesson No. 7: Motivational interviewing

Start by asking two irrational questions. Example: My teenage son doesn't want to clean his room, and I want him to clean it. I could try with bribery, I could try to exhort him, or I could threaten him. Most of these are not very effective.

Instead, try asking an irrational question. For example, ask: “On a scale of 1-10, how ready are you to clean your room?”

“Dad, I’m a two,” he might say. Typically, you would get frustrated by that, but instead, follow up with a second irrational question. You can ask, “Why didn’t you pick a lower number?”

This throws people off a bit because they expect to hear something like, “Why are you only a two”? Suddenly, my son comes up with a reason to say why he isn’t a one. Then he starts to articulate his reasons for doing something (I lost a piece of my homework, I don’t know where to start).

When people have their reason for doing something, they are more likely to do it. Now suppose he says, “I’m a zero.” That is a beneficial response. The response to that is: What can we do to make it a one?

Lesson No. 8: Become an ambivert

This is a term that has been in the literature since the 1920s. Ambivert is a little introverted and a little extroverted. Ambiverts know when to push and hold back. They know when to speak up and when to shut up.

Most people have both insides of them. We can’t change who we are, but we can move more toward the middle. We can learn to be both an introvert and extrovert at the same time.

Lesson No. 9: Learn how to listen

Listening is much more complicated than it seems, which is why a lot of people don’t do it very well. No one ever teaches us how to listen. This is where people go awry.

A lot of people think listening is a form of waiting. They are too quick to jump in and make their point instead of slowing down and listening to what the other person says. Listen to *listen*. You will very quickly realize how powerful this can be.

Lesson No. 10: 'Just 5 more' technique

If you have to reach out to prospects, but you've had a bad day, and you're ready to hang up your hat, say "just five more."

Commit to writing five more emails, and you know what happens — you end up writing 15. This technique is essential because you're giving yourself an offramp to do more.

There is a lot of research on goals. We tend to overvalue long-term goals and undervalue the interim goal. Sometimes, long-term goals can be unmotivating because they're too hard and too far away.

Now, excuse me while I go ask my six-year-old to put away her toys.

Amie Quirarte is a luxury real estate agent with [Tahoe Luxury Properties](#) in California and Nevada. Connect with her on [Facebook](#) or [LinkedIn](#).