

PERSUASION

Persuasion is a conscious attempt to influence others' opinions or behaviors. This process plays a significant role in student organization activity because it aids in change, it is an important way to communicate, and it recognizes that conflict exists and deals with it.

You have probably used processes of persuasion if your group has ever:

- tried to change a policy
- gotten a budget request or a request for co-sponsorship approved
- petitioned for office space
- attempted to get students or others to feel a particular way about an issue

STEPS TO EFFECTIVE PERSUASION

Step#1: The first step in effective persuasion is to clearly state your goal – what is it you want to do?

Step #2: Once you know your goal, determine who you must persuade, identifying all persons or groups.

Step #3: The third goal is to begin to develop methods of persuasion. First, you should carefully analyze the situation and the persons and groups whom you hope to persuade by answering these questions:

- Does what you want offer little or no perceived benefit to the person or persons you want to influence?
- Do you and those you want to persuade have about equal power?
- Can both sides help (or hurt) each other almost equally?

Step #4: After the analysis, select your methods and organize them into a process you will implement.

1. You are more likely to persuade others when you:
 - give logical reasons – statements that answer the question “why?”
 - relate the reasons directly to the persons you are attempting to persuade
 - use facts to support your reasons
 - share genuine feelings about the issue
 - relate feelings directly to the persons you are attempting to persuade
2. You are more likely to be an effective persuader in the long run when you are ethical. Lying, name-calling, exaggeration and distortion of facts has no place in ethical persuasion.
3. You are also more likely to persuade people when you and your organization have credibility. This means that you are more likely to be successful when people like you, trust you and have confidence in you. You have credibility if people see you as:
 - competent – you have done your homework and know what you are talking about
 - well-intentioned – you have a positive motive
 - ethical – you are telling the truth and displaying high standards and positive attitudes
 - likable – you are not trying to fight

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PERSUASION INCLUDES:

- reinforcing or strengthening a belief
- establishing a belief
- changing a belief
- moving people to action

FINAL THOUGHTS

Think of the process of persuasion as achieving shared goals. It should be seen as a joint effort rather than a win-lose situation. Analyzing your audience will help you to develop persuasive strategies that can help both you and those you are trying to persuade to achieve goals that are important to you.

Persuasion is a complex and difficult process that involves hard work, a significant amount of time, and a realization that practice is important. It requires patience and persistence. It is not easy, but it is often a critical process for student organizations and their leaders to be successful.