

The New Age of Persuasion

Jay Conger, in Frances Hesselbein & Rob Johnston (eds.), **On Leading Change: A Leader to Leader Guide**, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2002, 127-140.

Objective

- Examines ways in which leaders can enlist the support of a range of stakeholders for important decisions, especially in situations where they don't have position power.

Background

- Three forces have changed the requirements for effective leadership: (1) the need to work in cross-functional teams; (2) a more educated and more intrinsically motivated contemporary workforce; and (3) the electronic erosion of authority.
- 'If what you are proposing doesn't connect with the interest of your colleagues, your message will fall on deaf ears. It is crucial to understand what your audience is expecting, what they are concerned about, and their feelings on the issue you are addressing. As a persuader, you must never assume that your colleagues understand the advantage or necessity or urgency of what you are advocating.'

Main findings

- Successful change agents tend to describe their organisation's present situation and proposed direction in terms that emphasised the benefits of changing while simultaneously highlighting the dangers of the status quo.
- Start by asking yourself the following types of questions:
 - What aspects of the idea will proposition will have significant appeal to colleagues?
 - What might be attractive advantages?
 - How can I demonstrate these in terms of outcomes that will be meaningful to others?
 - If shared rewards/advantages are not apparent, how might I adapt my ideas or solutions so these will emerge?
- Refine your message by asking yourself the following types of questions:
 - Does the vocabulary I have chosen match that of my listeners?
 - Will the tone I choose sound right to them, for this occasion?
 - Is the emotional level right: enthusiastic versus anxious versus confident?
 - Are my analogies, metaphors and stories familiar enough that they will connect with the audience's own experiences?
- Effective leaders have always understood they must start by learning what matters to those they intend to lead.