

What's one key to effective persuasion in business communication?

Effective persuasion requires three elements – choice, self-interest, and simplicity. Of these, choice can be the most challenging to incorporate in your business communication.

People persuade themselves; all communicators need do is present a line of reasoning. Effective reasoning starts a conversation, aloud or internally, which allows your target to feel there's a choice. When people feel they have choices, they're more likely to work toward outcomes where everyone benefits.

Because they persuaded themselves, their conviction endures.

You may fear if you include choices when trying to persuade others you'll lose control over outcomes, or, you aren't sure how to do it. But even the simplest argument without choice for your target is less convincing.

Revisit your message's purpose and goal. Choice may be more visible when you know exactly what you want to accomplish.

Avoid yes or no questions, which stop thought. Your persuasive power is diminished if the target must restart the thinking process. Also avoid either-or options. The cake-or-Brussels-sprouts model may seem the easiest choice, but, while immediately persuasive, it's not effective through time.

Use words that provoke thought and choice, such as the Five Ws. Asking what, when, where, why and who will help your target inherently feel as if there's choice.

You can persuade well, you can persuade poorly, or you can refuse to persuade. But you have a choice.

