

PERSUASIVE COMMUNICATION AS ART OF PERSUASION

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Abstract: Well-known German sociologist Helmut Schoeck defined communication as a process where „the news is transmitted, as a sign or a symbol, from one organism to another, changing their behaviour”. Many sociologists, psychologists and communicologists later continued to explore this segment of communication – impact and change of behaviour of respondent. As the influence is one of the segments of the interactivity of the communication process, in this paper we want to present some theoretical considerations of this phenomenon of the communication process, and to point out the need of researching the persuasive communication in practice and in nonviolent action of social change.

Keywords: persuasion, interactivity, influence, change of attitude, communication process, nonviolent action

1. INTRODUCTION - DEFINITION

The term communication is used in the literature in a bewildering variety of definitions, Merten has counted about 160 of them, at the end of the seventies) (Merten, 1977, 29) that overlap partly with other terms, such as *reaction*, *interaction* or *behavior*. Paul Watzlawick, Janet. H. Beavin and Don D. Jackson (1974, 38) warned that it is completely different to speak a language and know something about this language: “It is as if we were woven into communication, yet, or perhaps because of it, we are almost incapable to communicate about communication.” There is almost complete unity that communication is “conditio sine qua non of human life and social order” (ibid, 13). Many authors (Parsons 1966, 33; Luhmann 1972, 190) consider functional communication necessary assumption of any society and the fundamental social process in itself. Social systems can be achieved and maintained

only if the person participants are interconnected through communication, because each joint action of individuals is based on the accepted meanings that are transmitted through communication (*communicatio* means not only *communication*, but also *community*, *participation*). The concept of communication turns into the concept of organization, because without communication there can be no organized operation (Cherry 1967, 15).

Some definitions restrict communication to *transfer of information*. According to them, communication is the process by which any information or notification is transmitted from the sender to the recipient (Coenberg 1966, 36). Other conceptual definitions see constitutive condition of communication in the (correct) the receipt of some messages (Larsen 1964, 349). It is difficult, however, to determine when the information is transferred "without error." For many authors the intention is determinative, i.e. intentionality to transfer information (Bentele and Beck 1994): communication is seen as intentional transmitting of information, i.e. a signal must be deliberately produced and "sent" for notices or communication. The famous German sociologist Helmut Schoeck (1969, 194) even understood communication as a process "in which a news is transmitted as a sign or symbol from one organism to another and changes his behavior." There is a danger that in such a definition of the concept of communication phenomena that don't have the effect of "behavioral change" be excluded such as "normal", innocuous conversation, philosophical discussions, boring school class or poor lecture, etc. In that case mass communication also would not be communication because mostly it does not cause direct behavior change.

Conceptual overlaps exist especially between *interaction* and *communication*. Some authors (Hockett 1958, 573; Kluckhohn, 1961, 895), apply both terms synonymous. On the other hand, the authors (Blau / Scott 1963 116) prove that the interaction and communication are related to different forms of the same social processes, wherein an *interaction* notifies the formal characteristics (frequency, the initiative, the subordination or superimposition, reciprocity), and the *communication* content of meaning. Schenk Michael (1994a, 173) states: "While the communication is a general assumption in social functioning, for the interaction and orientation of the reciprocal behavior of individuals, by the interaction we determine the flow of communication procedures, i.e. communication and interaction are mutually conditional.

Communication is a multidimensional process of establishing, developing and maintaining contact with people and it is born from the need of joint actions, including the exchange of information, the creation of the strategy of mutual relations, acceptance and understanding of another man.

We can say that communication is interaction by using symbols.

The process of alternating transmission of meaning in communication between partners is called the communication process. Communication is therefore primarily conduct which, from the perspective of the communicator, has the purpose of the transmission of messages to one or more persons by means of symbols.

This definition of communication, which relies on the concept of social action, requires another amendment, if we do not want to exclude an important form of human communication; since any behavior of a particular man can have the meaning of an observer, also *accidental transmission* of information can be considered communication (eg. in the area of non-verbal communication stammer, redness, posture, facial expressions, gestures, etc.). By this we also accept *meta-communication* axiom of Watzlawick / Beavina / Jackson (1974, 53),

which says: "You can not not communicate." Whatever we do or fail to do so, certain behavior (and inaction or silence) may be informative to the recipient who this behavior decodes or interpretes, giving it meaning. This dimension of communication does not fall within the concept of social action that is focused on the subjective meaning of action. Communication in such a defined sense encompasses, therefore, the interaction with the aid of symbols and inadvertently sending of information that the observer interpretes as information.

Communication is therefore a conscious interaction of establishing contact.

Taking into account the full complexity of the concept of communication, it is important to describe its structure, and then analyze each element.

Mutually connected structural elements of communication are:

- communication,
- interactivity and
- perception.

Communication represents the exchange of information among people.

Interactivity means the exchange of ideas and knowledge, but also a concrete action.

Perception means a process of mutual acceptance and mutual understanding.

Each of these three elements has an equally important role in the communication process.

The content of the communication means among other things, a way of interaction between interlocutors. Therefore it includes: copying, suggestion, reassurance, simulation.

Copying we can, roughly, define as the unconscious man's reluctant submission to certain emotional and mental states. It is also reflected in the acceptance and the transfer of certain emotional and mental states. This, says psychologist Parigin, characteristic of the behavior of group members (supporters, protesters, etc.). It has been demonstrated that with the development of human personality man becomes increasingly critical related to the behavior of the group, and thus is less susceptible to copying.

Suggestion is unfounded targeted influence on interlocutors. Suggestion involves the process of transmitting information based on its uncritical reception. Opposition to the functioning of the suggestive action is counter-suggestion. The effect of suggestion depends on age: children are more susceptible than adults to suggestion. Physically and mentally weakened people are also prone to suggestion. First and easiest is to be subject of suggestiveness of people in authority.

Assurance is supported by logic. The process of assurance involves obtaining consensual feedback based on a logical understanding of the message. Assurance is an intellectual influence on interlocutors through addressing his personal critical judgment.

The specificity of simulation, as opposed to copying and suggestions, is that it involves not only the external manifestations of the reception behavior of interlocutors, but also reproduction of his demonstrated behavior. If we speak about the adoption of proposed behavioral patterns, there are two types of imitation: imitation of a concrete man and imitations of norms of behavior accepted in a particular group of people.

Influence is, we can say, one of the most important parts of the content of the communication. Describing the communication, we often talk about influence. For example, "he was pushing me, but I did not give in," "he insulted me", etc.

Often in communication we are guided by the impression that we have about the other person. Sometimes it seems to us that our interlocutor is insulting us, sometimes that he is

flattering us, sometimes he confuses us. Behind the same words there can hide the most diverse influences that leave impression on us. One and the same situation can be understood differently by different parties, depending on what kind of impression they gained of the interview and how they influence each other.

In order to be able to more adequately analyze our methods of influence on interlocutors and their appropriateness in a given situation, it is necessary to answer the following questions:

1. What is a mutual relationship of the situation and influence?
2. How to choose the right influence?

One way of understanding the speech situation may be understanding of the situation of the interlocutors and their mutual positions. Each of us has certainly noticed in an interview, speech, public performance that is of great importance who "leads" and who "follows".

Speaking on the analysis of speech situation depending on the position of interlocutor, we can not bypass transactional analysis, which in the last fifteen years has become increasingly popular in the world. These phenomena was mostly studied by E. Berne in his book "What game are you playing" (2003) T. Harris in the book "I'm OK, you're OK" (1989), James M. and D. Džongvord in "Born winner" (1992). This popularity is not without reason. Transactional analysis teaches people the art of interaction and influence.

The essence of this theory is that it shows that the main impacts of communication are those which, consciously or unconsciously, derive from the direction of change and the regulation of their position or interlocutors in communication. There are several variants for determination of these positions.

1. English psychotherapist Pearls (1976) distinguishes two basic positions in the interview: the boss (master) and a subordinate. These two positions have several characteristics that make them different from each other. The boss is usually authoritarian, he knows everything "better than others". He is demanding, often resorts to insults. The main verb is "you must". Position of subordinate means stereotypical reactions. The subordinate is a man who needs protection, he depends on the boss, subordinate is disabled in his initiative and authority. Typical are his replicas "I wanted the best," "What can I do, I completely forgot about your request." However, although seemingly inferior, subordinate position gives more room for maneuver and could better be used.
2. Erik Bern considers that for the analysis of speech situations ego is very significant. He takes three roles: parent (as my parents have reacted in a similar situation), grown up (I am now) the child (how I reacted like a child in a similar situation), depending on the speech situation.

U sledećoj tabeli prikazane su osnovne karakteristike sa pozicija roditelja, odraslog i deteta u govornim situacijama: The following Table shows the basic features from the position of a parent, child and adult in life situations:

When we talk about the transaction, it is necessary to say that it implies the intention of the fact that, ultimately, affects the understanding of speech situation. We distinguish three types of transactions: Complementing, intersecting and hidden.

Complementing is called such reciprocal operation in which interlocutors adequately accept mutual positions, understand the situation identically and their operation are direct-

ed in the direction in which each expect it. They differ in two subspecies of complementing action: equal and unequal.

Table 1: The basic characteristics of the position of a parent, adult and child in communicative situations

Basic characteristics	Parent	Grown up	Child
Characteristic words and terms	«Everybody knows that you never have to...» «I don't understand how they allow that...»	«How?», «What,«When?», «Where?»«Why?» «It is possible...» «Probably...»	«I am angry with you!» «There it is!» «Excellent!» «Discusting!»
Intonation	Blaming, patronizing, critical	Completely adequate to reality	Very emotional
Attitude	arrogant superior withdrawn	attention seeking information	Non-defined Play Boredom Submitted
Facial expression	Frowning Not satisfied worried	Open eyes Total attention	Submission Satisfaction
Poses	Arms on the hip «F» pose Raised point finger Arms crossed on chest	Leaning towards the other man Head is turned towards the one who is speaking	Spontaneous movements

Equally complementing operation involves a situation in which the interlocutors are completely equal, the same level, located at the same position, are equal. Because of the identical position of interlocutors this subspecies of complementing operation can be called communication with full mutual understanding.

Uneven operation involves communication with the different positions: Boss - employee, superior - subordinate. In such a communication operation does not end with the transfer of information, but more often with the mark of the interlocutor.

Example:

The superior says: «You have made a mistake again - you can't be trusted with!», and the subordinate answers: «Well, what to do, I am incapable.»

Another aspect of the transaction is mutually intersecting operation. Elements of such a communication are very rare. In fact, the intersecting interplay is incorrect operation. Its irregularity is reflected in the fact that interlocutors demonstrate the inadequacy of understanding of the position and influence of the other participant, while, in fact, on the other hand they very strongly express their own intentions and influences.

Example:

A friend asks: «What's the time?». He gets the answer: «Can't you look yourself?»

In this situation, one friend asked for information, but the other did not understand or would not understand. If they do not find a way to understand and initiate communication in the other direction, the conversation will turn into conflict.

Hidden interplay involves two levels simultaneously: the public, expressed verbally and the hidden, the one that is implied. Consider the following example. Suppose that two workers are sitting on a boring meeting and talking.

«Don't forget, our buyers are coming at four.», says the first worker.

«Yes, please, now it's time to leave», answers the otheri. (This is the example of public mutual operation),

«It's awfully boring» What do you think if we leave now?- suggests the first worker.

«Bravo, excellent idea!», answers the other. (This is the example of hidden operation).

The public functions from the positions 'grown up – grown up', and the hidden from the positions 'child – child'.

Using hidden techniques of interaction involves a very good knowledge of the interlocutor, as well as a great understanding of nonverbal communication - tone of voice, intonation, facial expressions and gestures, precisely because they convey the hidden content.

Why does a man find himself in one of the different positions in communication?

On hearing certain words and intonation of our interlocutor, we can clearly identify the situation. If we hear irritated tone or aggression directed at us, it means that the situation is threatening and we take an appropriate position. At the same time, using different means of communication, we can influence the situation, set the tone and direction of the further course of events in communication.

Speaking about influence, we have to mention persuasive communication, which is a process of persuasion, or persuading a person / people to adopt certain attitudes, beliefs and values, as well as the specific behavior. Persuasive communication involves various procedures, from personal assurances ("I one I"), through advertisements (economic, political, ...), to complex campaigns and social actions.

Designing a persuasive message implies answers to the following questions:

- present in the message the facts and numbers?
- target the message on the emotions of the people?
- use some attractive celebrity?

Persuasive communication is a process of persuasion of the person or persons to adopt certain beliefs, attitudes and values, as well as the specific behavior. It includes a variety of actions, from personal assurances through advertisements (economic, political, media...), to complex campaigns and social actions. It also involves answering a number of questions:

- present in the message the facts and numbers?
- target the message on the emotions of the people?
- use some attractive celebrity?

Michael and Susan Osborn from the University of Memphis, consider that: “Persuasion is art of persuading others to devote the necessary attention to your point of view”. (Osborn, 1994)

However, the speech is not the only means of persuasion. A person who wants to convince someone to something, must himself have faith in what he represents. In addition, persuasion is achieved with the help of technical means, images, sound, music, media ...

One of the important properties of persuasion is that we want to change the current situation, to initiate someone, a person or group from indifference into the state of movement or condition of interest, to persuade them to make a decision and take the action. It is important to bear in mind the wide range of variables and circumstances that influence the success of persuasion.

2. THEORETICAL APPROACH

Socio-psychological research persuasive communication begins with Yale APPROACH TO CHANGING ATTITUDES which is based on examination of the conditions under which it is likely that people will change their views in response to a persuasive message.

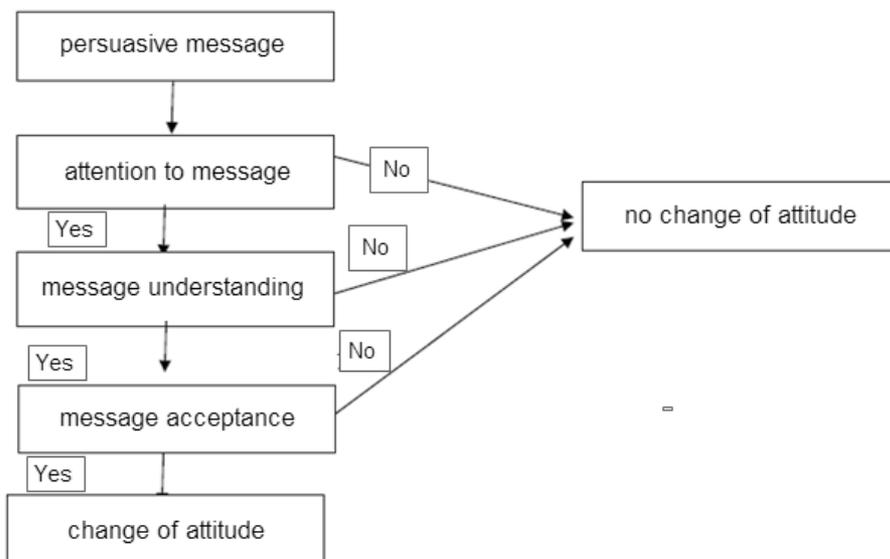


Figure 1. Sequential model of persuasive communication

Jejl pristup promeni stava je sekvencijalni. Razvio ga je profesor Hovland (Hovland, 1958) sa svojim saradnicima još 1953. na Jejl univerzitetu, po kojem i sam pristup dobi ime.

Yale approach to changing attitudes is sequential. It was developed by professor Hovland (Hovland, 1958) and his associates in 1953 at Yale University, from which it got its name.

It assumes a series of steps that occur between attempts of persuasive action and the resulting change of attitude. Disruption at any stage stops the process of changing attitudes.

Yale approach to changing attitudes approaches persuasion as a form of communication and in consideration of effective persuasion starts from the basis of the communication process:

1. SOURCE sends
2. MESSAGE (thoughts and/or feelings) through
3. CHANNELS (hearing, visual, tactile...) to
4. RECEIVER

The effectiveness of persuasive communication thus depends on:

- WHO says (SOURCE)
- WHAT he says (MESSAGE)
- HOW does he say (CHANNEL)
- TO WHOM he says (RECEIVER).

The elements of persuasive communication

1. Source or sender

Izvor poruke trebalo bi da bude uverljiv i privlačan. Objasnićemo ukratko koje osobine bi trebalo da poseduje pošiljalac poruke. The origin of the message should be compelling and attractive. We will explain briefly what features sender of the message should possess.

Convincing

Convincing senders are those that are perceived as professional and credible:

- expert sources (persons or institutions)
- people who do not hesitate while speaking,
- who speak quickly,
- watching the listener right in the eye,
- those that we think do not know that they are listened to,
- advocating positions contrary to their own interests (they do not follow their interest but the truth).

Attraction

The following people are attractive:

- those who are physically attractive
 - those who are similar to the receiver of the message
 - Popular public persons.
2. Message

Whether the receiver will or will not understand the message is a very important moment in persuasive communication. From the understanding of the message depends that change in attitude. Therefore, it is very important to know the features of the message in a persuasive communication.

Use of emotions

- connecting the message with positive feelings,
- connecting the message with moderate fear for which we offer solution.

Distance of message from the attitude of the receiver

- less distant message is more successful,
- the more credible the source, the more distant the message can be,
- if the receiver hasn't had any attitude so far, more distant message can be advocated than if he had opposite attitude.

One-sided message

- when we know that the message is in accordance with receiver's attitudes
- when receivers are not aware of opposite arguments,
- when it is not probable that receivers shall later accept the attitudes of the opposition.

Mutual message

- when we have more demanding and more sophisticated receivers,
- when the message is not in the accordance with receiver's attitudes.

Primacy or recency

- arguments presented earlier have a greater impact, so it is better to first present the side of the message which is in accordance with a preferred position,
 - when there is a time gap between the two sides of the message, the impact of previous information gets lost, and the latest information is still fresh in the memory (it is best to be the last speaker).

3. Communication channel

The channel of communication is another essential part of the communication process. It, along with more or less noise, transmits messages. In persuasive communication, as usual, it can be direct or mediated. With the message of persuasive communication receiving can be:

Active or passive

- positions resulting from direct experience are tougher than those that are acquired in a passive way via persuasive message.

Personal (direct)

- Face to face communication has the highest impact.

Through media

- they are successful when it comes to less important or unknown topics,
- it takes place in 2 steps (Katz, 1974):

MEDIA → EXPERTS → RECEIVERS.

4. Receivers

The last in the communication channel are recipients. They send feedback to the source of the message and they are the ones that will change or not change their position. In persuasive communication we should take care of a few things when it comes to the recipients:

What are they thinking about when receiving the message

- warning that we want to change their opinion reduces the effectiveness of persuasion,
- distraction increases the effectiveness of persuasion.

Mood

- good mood increases the effectiveness of persuasion peripheral route, but reduces the desire to analyze arguments.

Age of the receiver

- attitudes of younger people are less stable.

Intelligence

- the less intelligent will be more influenced by messages,
- the more intelligent pay attention to the quality of arguments.

Self-respect

- people with lower self-esteem will be more influenced by the message.

Personal involvement (interest)

- it is more likely that highly involved (interested) recipients will be influenced by the quality of the arguments.

Ways to change attitudes

Two ways of persuasion are possible. The chosen way depends on the question WHEN people will be more influenced by:

- a) the content of the message or
- b) the way of presenting the message.

There are two influential theories of persuasion and both provide similar response:

1. MODEL OF LIKELIHOOD OF ELABORATION (Petty i Cacioppo, 1986)
2. HEURISTIC- SYSTEM MODEL (Shelly Chaiken, 1989).

Both models assume the existence of two parallel processes to change attitudes and determine the conditions under which to use of them. Also, both of these theories take into account that people may not always be able or motivated enough to engage in the entire sequential process.

These two theories are distinguished by the following characteristics:

3. Central or systemic means the focus of interested people on the arguments and responding through positively directed thoughts, and

4. peripheral or heuristic means external influence on people so as to create acceptance without much thinking (eg. the attractiveness of the source origin).

According to both theories, people are motivated by certain conditions to direct attention to the facts in the message and to think about these facts. This is called the central route of persuasion.

In other situations people, however, are not motivated to pay attention to the facts presented in the message and rely solely on irrelevant characteristics of messages, such as, for example, who is giving the message or how long the message is. In this case, people can be influenced by peripheral persuasion way.

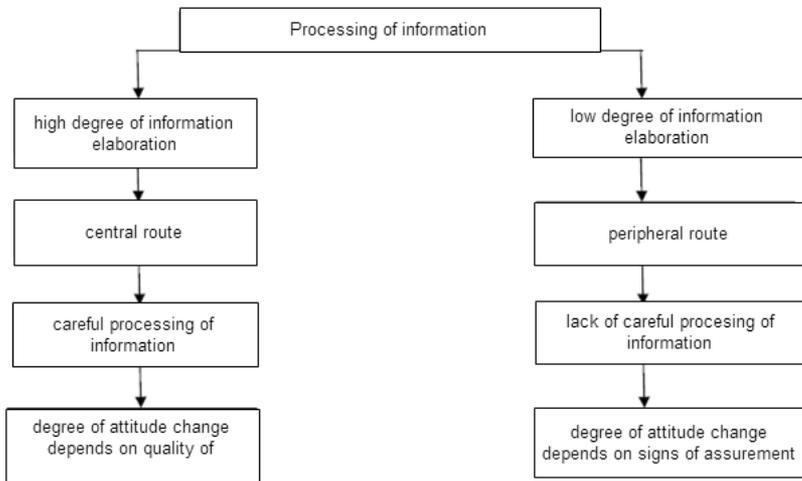


Figure 2. Elaboration likelihood model

The way the attitude change will be achieved depends on the motivation to think about the message and the ability to think about the message.

Which way of change of attitude people will use will depend on the motivation depending on the importance of the topic for the interviewee. The more important the topic, the more people will use the central route persuasion.

Therefore, they will be most influenced by the force of arguments.

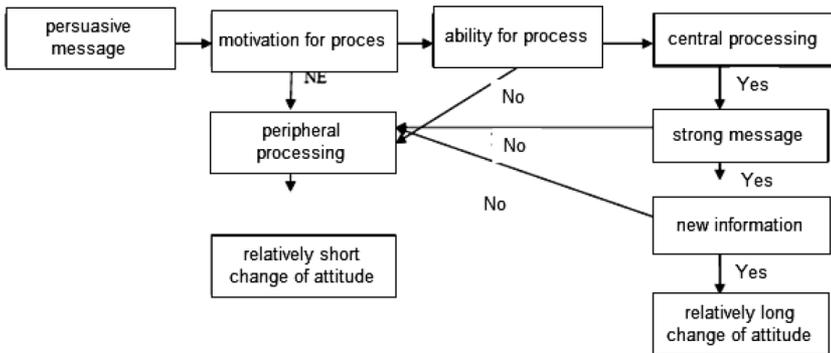


Figure 3. Ways of changing attitudes

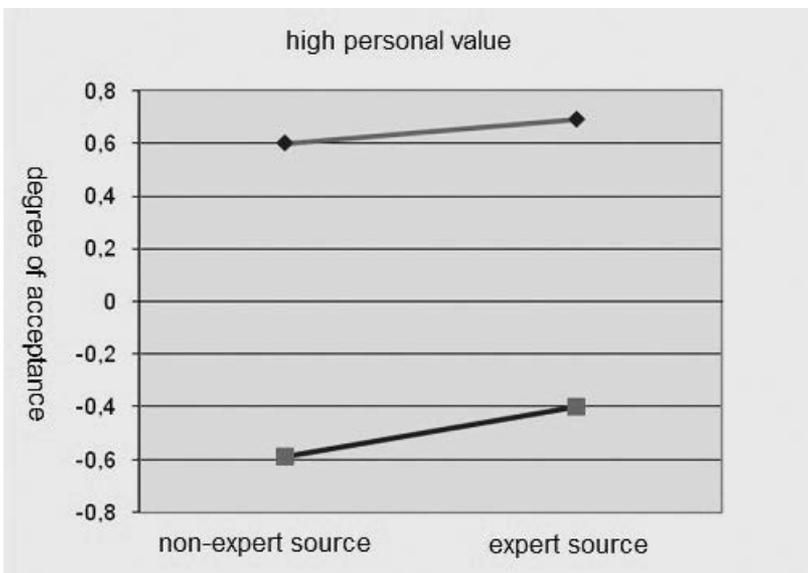


Chart 1. The effect of personal importance to the way of changing attitude - high importance

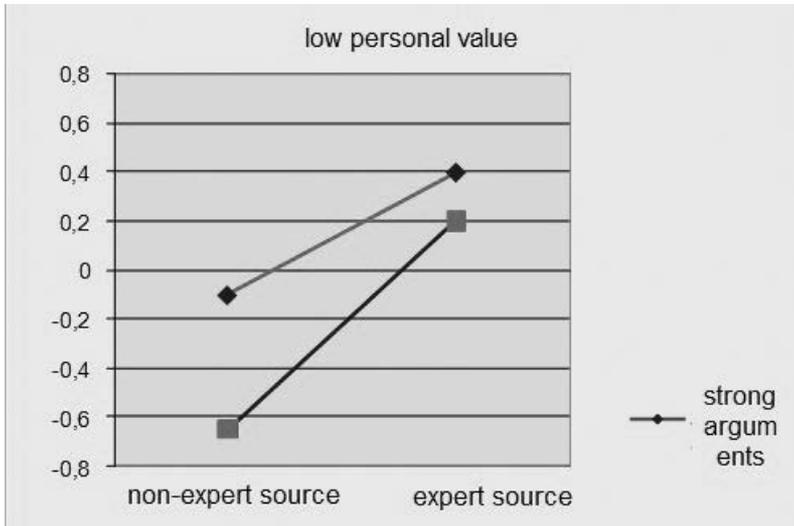


Chart 2. The effect of personal importance to the way of changing attitude - low importance

The graphs represent the effect of personal importance on change of attitude measured at Yale, and was related to the issue of introducing a comprehensive university exam. The measurement was carried out by Piti, Kassioyi and Goldman in 1986.

The higher the number, the more participants in the communication agree with the message.

When the question was very important, the participants were more influenced by the strength of arguments than the expertise of speakers. This is the central route persuasion, which is presented on the first chart. On the second chart we see a peripheral route persuasion. When the question was not important, the participants were more influenced by the expertise of speakers rather than the quality of the arguments. (Adapted from *Petty i Cacioppo, 1986, based on the research by Petty, Cacioppo and Goldman, 1981.*)

Motivation for careful listening to the message content may depend on the level of need for cognition, personality trait that reflects the degree in which people can engage and enjoy in the deliberate cognitive activities.

The way of change the attitude also depends on the ability of people to direct attention to the arguments. Smarter people will pay more attention to the quality of arguments. On the other hand, the higher the degree of disturbance, the more likely they will use the peripheral road.

- Factors that increase the likelihood of the central information processing are:
- Personal importance of the topic,
- neutral mood and
- direct experience with the object of attitude
- increase the motivation;
- written message,
- multiple messages,

- multiple sources and
- broad knowledge of the topic
- increase capacity.

If a change of attitude is achieved through central road, it will last longer, the attitude as such will be more resistant to adverse impacts and it will better predict behavior.

Every day we start the day with a variety of messages with which someone tries to convince us something. They convince us with advertisements to buy something, to quit smoking, to vote for someone... When we get to work, many people will try to convince us with their smile at how good they feel, how it happy and successful they look. A person who at the end of the day does not accept any of the numerous persuasive messages probably has a problem in communication. If nothing else, some of the messages will remain in the subconscious to act in time to be confirmed, or in a few days to subconsciously prevail when deciding on purchasing, voting in elections, certain change ...

We live in a persuasive world, world where persuasion is being learned and becomes an integral part of every successful person.

It is important to note that a persuasive person is very powerful and that this power may be used for unethical purposes. A man with a high persuasive power can manipulate people and convince them of something that is not proper and ethical.

The field that remains open for research is the following:

- Examine the persuasive competence of managers and leaders;
- Examine the quality that has an effective manager in persuasion;
- Examine the relationship of verbal and nonverbal means of persuasion in organizations.

Finally it should be noted that the starting point of this study was the analysis of persuasive communication as a segment of the interactive side of the communication process and finding and consideration of appropriate practical examples to be studied in the literature in this area and examples from the spheres of public life, from the initial idea of dealing with communication, in fact, equally engaged in its application in non-violent action.

While nonviolent action logically follows from the theory of communication, in itself it is an almost inexhaustible area for further analytical work.

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