



LEADERS & SUCCESS

Make A Powerful Case

By Cord Cooper

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Getting ahead often means winning people to your point of view. It depends heavily on your approach — and the allies you tap to build your case.

- Bring 'em in. If the idea involves risk, some will be hesitant to show early support, says business coach Chris St. Hilaire, author of "27 Powers of Persuasion."

To win people over, use what he calls "third-party validation." Mention key people who support your idea — whether execs, co-workers or industry heavyweights.

If the idea's gaining traction, "nobody wants to be the last" to climb aboard, he noted.

- Defuse. "One of the easiest ways to soothe an ego is to use the phrase 'From my perspective,'" St. Hilaire said. "Perspective is an incredibly useful word that implies you're going to take the emotion out of the conversation."

- Play it up. When presenting viewpoints, look for strengths in each situation. If you're the only woman in a meeting, "own that perspective instead of ignoring it," St. Hilaire said.


He suggested trying something like this: "Can I tell you what I'm hearing from women? They account for 43% of this market."

If you're young or transitioning to a new career, you may be seen as lacking experience. How to fight it? Offer fresh insights convincingly. Back ideas up with facts.

- Show appreciation. If trying to persuade your boss in a one-on-one meeting, "use the first few minutes to make him feel valued," St. Hilaire said.

Thank him for taking the time to meet with you, then get to the point quickly.

- Phrase it positively. When presenting your case, use key words that gain support, such as choice, accountability and fairness. He gave this example: "I want to make sure you have choices, and that in the end someone is held accountable so we ensure the fairest result."

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Investing Tip

EPS estimates can help you spot winners.



- Give 'em ammo. To bring people aboard, arm your allies with facts — talking points and statistics they can use to make your case, he says. Keep your points brief, so allies — and their audience — can remember them.

In presentations, simplify your story as much as possible. Show how the endgame can be reached. Stress the benefits.

- Size 'em up. Howard Gardner, author of "Changing Minds," suggests asking yourself:

Does the person you're trying to persuade respond well to an upfront approach, or should you open with questions and examples?

What are the person's hot-button issues?

Is the topic you're about to broach one of those issues?

- Compromise. When seeking support, don't respond to requests with a negative. Saying no has an air of finality. Look for common ground with a "let's-try-this" approach, St. Hilaire said.

- Keep cool. The more calmly you make your case, the more effective it'll be, notes communications coach Jack Griffin, author of "How to Say It at Work."

- Be prepared. List the negatives people could raise — then address them early in your presentation.

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