

Business Skills 360 – Selling your Ideas (Part 1)

Discussion Questions

1. Do you have tricks or techniques that you use to persuade people of your opinions?
2. In which work situations do you often need to convince people of your ideas?
3. Think of people you think are good at 'selling' their ideas. What techniques do they use?

Transcript

Hello and welcome back to the Business Skills 360 podcast. I'm Tim Simmons and today we're going to take a look at how to 'sell' your ideas.

You may be full of great ideas, but exactly how do you get people to **buy into** them? How do you get people **on board** with your brilliant plans? Well, today I want to share a few tools and techniques that will help you do just that.

These tools and techniques have two important effects: they build connections and they build **credibility**. The connections can be between you and your listeners, but they can also be between your listeners and your *idea*. Those connections will generate **buy-in**. And that credibility can be *your* credibility and your idea's credibility. You, and your idea, have to be believable and trustworthy.

Okay, let's start simple. One of the most basic yet powerful tools you can use is a person's name. People love to hear their own name repeated in conversation. It makes them feel important. It tells them that you care about them as individuals. This creates a strong personal connection between you and your listeners, which makes them more **receptive** to your ideas. So instead of telling me, "I think you should do a presentation on your project," tell me this: "*Tim*, I think you should do a presentation on your project." The effect is **subtle**, but strong.

Great. Now, let's talk about what you do with your idea. You need to help people connect to that idea, to understand it, and to see how great it is. Making comparisons can help do that. People love to compare things, situations, points in time, people... We do it naturally, it's how we organize our world and how we evaluate things. So *show* people the difference between your idea and others. Show them exactly how your idea will make a difference. It's like the **before and after** pictures in an ad for a weight loss product. It's clear and persuasive, and people will be able to connect better with your idea.

Now, why should people believe you? Well, you and your ideas need *credibility*. You need to demonstrate that you've *thought your ideas through*, and that there is good reason to believe in them. To demonstrate that, you need to give *evidence* and provide *concessions*. Evidence is basically proof that your idea is a good one. Don't assume others might agree with you just because you're a fun colleague or a hard worker. Tell them *why* you believe what you do, and if the reasons are strong enough, they'll believe it too. Keep the evidence real. Show them examples that they can *relate to*, ideas that improve that connection between them and your idea.

And then there's concession. Giving concessions means actually mentioning evidence or ideas that go *against* what you're trying to say. Don't talk about this too much, but show that you realize things aren't *black and white*, that nothing is perfect. It improves your credibility. Just think about the last time you heard someone refuse to admit any kind of criticism of their idea. That person didn't sound too *reasonable*, did they?

Now, there's another reason to mention ideas that go against yours: to *knock them down*. You set them up, then you knock them down. You have to *anticipate* the criticism or the arguments against your idea. Then you *acknowledge* them. You say exactly what they are. And then you say why they don't *make sense* or should be ignored. In this way, you are taking and destroying weapons against your idea. It's a *preemptive strike*, so to speak.

So remember, your ideas are only truly great if you can sell them to others. And to do that, use people's names, use comparison, give them evidence and concessions, and knock down your opposition's ideas before they get a chance to mention them. With those techniques, your ideas will *stick*.

That's all for today. Next week we'll look at different attitudes you can adopt that will help sell your ideas. If you'd like to test yourself on what we've just covered, have a look at the myBEonline.com website. There you'll find a quiz about today's show as well as a complete transcript.

Thanks for listening, and see you again soon.

Vocabulary

To buy into - to agree with or accept, as in an idea, argument or theory; if people in general buy into an idea, then we say it has 'buy-in;' "Bob was disappointed because nobody bought into his plan to get rid of the CEO."

On board - if someone is on board with a plan or idea, it means he or she accepts it and will work toward its goals; "The manager held a meeting to try and get everyone on board with the revised sales targets."

Credibility - the quality of being believed or trusted; "When the public found out about the accountant's crimes, he lost all credibility."

Receptive - ready or willing to receive, listen, or accept; "The audience was not very receptive to the politician's announcement of a tax increase."

Subtle – difficult to notice or understand; “My boss made a subtle suggestion that I should cut my hair.”

Before and after – before and after photos show a change or transformation, usually to advertise a product or service; “The ad for the new weight loss pills showed some surprising before and after photos of people who had used the product.”

Think something through – to think carefully about something before making a decision; “Carla took months to think through her choice of university.”

Evidence – a sign or reason to believe something; proof; “The damage from the computer virus was evidence that the company needed to update its computer security system.”

Concession – the admitting of an idea that goes against one’s own argument; “John believed in cost-cutting, but gave the concession that it would negatively affect morale.”

To relate to – if someone can relate to a story, idea, or person, it means he or she can understand and feel a connection with it; “I didn’t enjoy the book because I couldn’t relate to its main character.”

Black and white – if an issue or situation is ‘black and white,’ it means there is one clearly right opinion and one clearly wrong opinion; “The governor thinks that free trade is a black and white issue, but it’s actually very complicated.”

Reasonable – if something or someone is reasonable, it means there is good reason to believe it or he is correct, fair, and not extreme; “Customers were upset because they didn’t think that a 20% price increase was reasonable.”

To knock something down – to show why something is not true or correct; “Dana quickly knocked down my idea that we needed to change our corporate structure.”

To anticipate – to see or predict something before it happens and to plan accordingly; “Lawyers for management anticipated the union’s demands and prepared effective arguments against them.”

To acknowledge – to show that you understand something exists or happened; “I acknowledged Ernie’s contribution to the project and then explained why it wasn’t good enough.”

Make sense – if something makes sense, it either means it is understandable or it is a practical idea; “The real estate agent said it just doesn’t make sense to buy a house when interest rates are so high.”

Preemptive strike – a preemptive strike is an action you take against someone before they can attack you; “When we heard our biggest competitor was planning to steal some of our clients, we launched a preemptive strike.”

To stick – to stay in place, to be accepted. “If you want your ideas to stick in people’s minds, you need to connect your idea to the audience’s needs.”

Review

1. According to Tim, the two important effects of using these tools and techniques is to build _____ and _____.
2. Which of the following are techniques that Tim recommends? (select all that apply)
 - A. using concession
 - B. showing weakness
 - C. using people's names
 - D. being receptive to others' ideas
 - E. making comparisons
 - F. providing evidence
 - G. assuming others agree with you
 - H. arguing against others' ideas
 - I. ignoring time restrictions
3. Why does Tim talk about 'before and after pictures in an advertisement for a weight loss product?'
 - A. to show what kinds of products can be sold with his techniques
 - B. to emphasize the importance of visual aids
 - C. to demonstrate the effectiveness of making comparisons
 - D. to criticize cheap advertising tricks
4. What type of evidence and examples does Tim suggest using?
 - A. financial ones
 - B. ones that people can relate to
 - C. ones that haven't been used before
 - D. ones that are easy to remember
5. Choose the two reasons why we might talk about ideas that oppose ours.
 - A. to show that we have thought about things completely
 - B. to begin a debate
 - C. to explain why they are not strong ideas
 - D. to pretend that we agree with our opponents
6. According to Tim, your ideas are only truly great if you can _____ them to others.

Review Answers

1. According to Tim, the two important effects of using these tools and techniques is to build _____ and _____.

Connections / credibility

2. Which of the following are techniques that Tim recommends?

A. using concession

C. using people's names

E. making comparisons

F. providing evidence

H. arguing against others' ideas

3. Why does Tim talk about 'before and after pictures in an advertisement for a weight loss product?'

C. to demonstrate the effectiveness of making comparisons

4. What type of evidence and examples does Tim suggest using?

B. ones that people can relate to

5. Choose the two reasons why we might talk about ideas that oppose ours.

A. to show that we have thought about things completely

C. to explain why they are not strong ideas

6. According to Tim, your ideas are only truly great if you can _____ them to others.

sell

Online Practice

Click the "Launch" button to open the **online practice**:

