

Power of Persuasion

For those in the audience looking for ways to boost their ability to influence and persuade their prospects and clients, **Robert B. Cialdini, Ph.D.**, an expert in persuasion, compliance and negotiation, was just the person they needed. “If you incorporate even a couple of the strategies I am going to talk to you about, you will increase the likelihood of a client telling you ‘yes,’” he told Main Platform attendees.

The first strategy Cialdini shared was what he called the “law of reciprocation.” He explained that from childhood, people across the world are taught that they must not take without giving back. “If you give first,” Cialdini said, “your client will want to give to you in return.” He offered this example to clarify: If you’ve gone to great lengths to do something for a client or prospect and they thank you for your service, don’t ever tell them “It was no problem.” Instead, Cialdini explained, acknowledge the service and then incorporate a statement that suggests reciprocation: “You can respond by saying, ‘Of course, I was glad to help, and I know you would have done the same for me,’” he told attendees.

Cialdini then explained to participants that people want what they think they can’t do without. “You need to tell your prospects and clients what is unique and uncommon about the products and services you offer,” he said. Even more convincing, but along these same lines, Cialdini advised attendees to discuss what the client or prospect will lose if they don’t buy their products and services, even suggesting that this should be done before advisors discuss what there is to be gained. “People are more motivated to act when faced with the idea of losing something than by the thought of gaining the very same thing,” he explained.

“People also want to follow legitimate experts,” said Cialdini. “So, before you try to get people to buy your products, you need to show you are an expert at what you do.” This is more effective, he explained, when it comes from someone other than you. “Have someone

who knows you and does business with you talk to a potential client,” Cialdini said.

At this point, it’s also important to show people that you can be trusted, he added. One of the best ways to do this is to present the weakest aspect of the product or service you are offering and then immediately follow this with the product’s or service’s greatest strength. “Letting people know where your products and services may be weak is a great way to establish trust,” Cialdini said. “Following with their strengths is a great way to make a sale.”

Cialdini also encouraged members to get at least something in writing when they meet with clients and prospects. “Studies have shown that people live *up* to what they write *down*,” he explained. “So, try to get them to put at least something in writing before they leave a meeting with you.”

The power of the majority also is a good persuasive tool, Cialdini said. “Many people decide what they should do in a situation by looking at what others like them are doing,” he told attendees. For financial services professionals, this means gathering — and then sharing with prospects — testimonials from existing clients.

Lastly, Cialdini encouraged attendees to spend time getting to like their clients. Though this might sound strange, he said, people like to work with people who like them. “We spend so much time trying to get our clients to like us,” he told attendees. “What we should be doing is spending time getting to genuinely like our clients and prospects.” **RTT**

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