



At Stephens Rivet and Machine, we're all about fasteners, but our expanding product line includes much more than just rivets. In this edition, we introduce our "Product Showcase" feature, designed to exhibit some of our more unusual, new, or versatile fastening products, and Dr. Jen offers insight into human motivation with her article on the psychology of persuasion. We invite you to read on, and to visit us online as we continue to expand our products and services. Whether you're looking for 50 rivets or 50 million, we can take care of you. Any size, any style, any material: call us first.



#### About the author

Best-selling author and trainer Dr. Jennifer MacLennan has been coaching professionals to communication effectiveness for nearly thirty years. In addition to consulting, teaching, and writing on leadership, persuasion, public speaking, and technical writing, Dr. Jen's background includes experience as an industrial designer. Professor and founder of the Graham Centre for the Study of Communication at the University of Saskatchewan, Dr. Jen also offers her services on a consultant basis to business and industry. Her latest book, the fifth edition of her *Effective Business Communication*, will soon be released by Oxford University Press.



## Communication Doctor

### The Psychology of Persuasion

Have you ever wondered why people still get taken in by con games? Why some TV ads irritate, while others make us smile? Why one politician can't do a single thing right in the eyes of the public, while another, doing the same things, seems untouchable? Or, closer to home, have you wondered what's wrong when the sales pitch that works beautifully with Jones falters badly when presented to Smith?

Every successful business or sales professional recognizes that understanding the audience is the key to effective persuasion. But while each audience is unique in its specific details, influence research has identified six principles that provide insight into the psychological processes that drive us to accept, or reject, the appeals of others.

•**Reciprocity** describes the expectation we feel, both as giver and as receiver, that we should respond to a kind or generous gesture with a similar gesture of our own: in other words, we feel some commitment to "return the favour," to give something in exchange for a benefit we have received from someone else. This is the principle that makes corporate gifts and promotional items an effective means of securing good will from a client.

•**Commitment** means that we are more easily persuaded to continue with a course of action that we have already chosen than we are to choose a different approach. Humans are creatures of habit, and typically do not change direction without a very good reason to do so. The principle of commitment is pervasive, in part because we find routine comforting. It helps to explain why it's easier to retain an existing customer than to gain a new one, and why it can be challenging to win back a lost account.

•**Scarcity**—the idea that something is rare or exclusive—confers a higher perceived value, making the scarce object more potent as a tool of persuasion. Emphasizing an object's scarcity increases our perception that it is special and desirable, and in possessing a rare or scarce commodity, we obtain for ourselves a sense of the same distinction and exclusivity. This principle explains how targeted promotions and "limited time offers" work.

*"Psychology of Persuasion" is continued on page 2 . . .*



Dr. Jen welcomes your questions and topic suggestions for future Communication Doctor columns. You can reach her at [Dr-Jen@Stephensrivet.com](mailto:Dr-Jen@Stephensrivet.com)



## Product Showcase



### Chicago Screws

The Chicago screw, also known as a binding post or architectural bolt, is a versatile fastening product with a host of applications. Originally designed for the printing industry to bind large catalogues, the Chicago screw is simple to apply, with no machinery required except for a simple hole punch.

Stephens offers a host of colours and materials, including:

- aluminum
- poly
- stainless steel
- brass
- black brass
- plated steel (zinc or nickel).

Aluminum can be anodized (coloured) in black and metallic, navy, red, or green. All metal screws can be baked enamel coated to match any pantone color. Chicago screws come in lengths of up to 6 inches and can be further extended almost indefinitely to allow the binding of documents 10" thick or more.



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### *The Psychology of Persuasion ... .continued from page 1*

•**Liking** persuades because, in general, we feel more comfortable taking advice or direction from people we approve than from those we dislike. In other words, people who like us, and whom we like in return, have a greater chance of persuading us than do those with whom we have not forged a relationship. This is the principle being invoked in the commonplace wisdom that business is "all about relationships."

•**Authority** refers to a person's credibility and self-assurance, and to that person's command of self and situation. A person with authority is likely to be looked on by others as a leader, and is able to inspire confidence in others. In general, we are likely to defer to those we perceive to be credible or authoritative; we are generally more inclined to model ourselves on these people, to submit to their guidance, or to follow their lead. This principle underscores the truism that there is no substitute for a thorough mastery of your industry, your products, or yourself.

•**Social proof**, or consensus, refers to our increased readiness to accept or approve of ideas, attitudes, or actions if they have already been accepted by others. This principle is familiar to every child who has ever petitioned a parent with the claim that "all my friends are doing it." Familiar, too, is the stock answer: "If everyone else jumped off a cliff, would you do it, too?" But while—as your parents rightly warned—there is folly in simply following the crowd, social proof is nevertheless important in developing professional and social competence, since we learn what to do in an unfamiliar situation by watching the behaviour of those who are more experienced.

The ability to motivate and influence other people is critical to success in any aspect of business, from management to sales, and the principles of persuasion can help to guide us in understanding why people make the choices they do.

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