

# Persuasion Framework

## STEP 2 - GUIDE

### Step 2: Guide

Rig your message to achieve goals and guide customer decisions.

**When the doctor strikes your knee with a reflex hammer**, here's what happens:

Receptors in the struck tendon generate an impulse that is carried via sensory nerves to your spinal cord. The signal is transmitted across a synapse to a lower motor neuron.

An upper motor neuron (in your brain) generates a response signal, which travels down the lower motor neuron to the target muscle. And then, without asking yourself to, **you kick**.

Especially the first time you see it happen, you marvel at the reflex. You would have sworn it wasn't possible, but the evidence is irrefutable.

Unconscious reflexes are, indisputably, at work within every one of your potential customers as they make decisions. These reflexes can work for you, and they can work against you.

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PRIMACY EFFECT

CONFIRMATION BIAS

SOCIAL PROOF

ANCHORING

EXTREMENESS AVERSION

PRATFALL EFFECT

COCKTAIL PARTY EFFECT

LOSS AVERSION

RECIPROCITY

SCARCITY

PARADOX OF CHOICE

EXPLANATORY DEPTH

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CHARM PRICING



# Decision Reflexes

Free tools you can use to help customers digest the same truths and form more favorable opinions.

**Your long sleeves are drenched from perspiration and draped over your shoulder, which is developing a friction rash.**

When you started the hike this morning, it was cloudy and 60 degrees. Four hours later it's 95 degrees, and the sun has sucked all the moisture out of the air.

The scorching solar rays are beating down and reflecting off the orange and gold terrain that envelops you. You're frustrated and exhausted. You can't believe you didn't bring a hat. *Didn't the*

*brochure say July was the best time of year to visit?*

**It's July 2003 and you are at The Petrified Forest National Park in Arizona.** Your flip phone has no GPS feature and no signal here. But, at last, you recognize the stretch of trail ahead of you. Your hike along the edge of the Painted Desert is almost over. This was not the adventure you had in mind today, but at least you'll have a story to look back on. And you survived it.

***It would be nice to have a souvenir!***

As soon as you think it, a perfect little piece of petrified tree fern presents itself to you, like a gift.

You pick it up. It's incredibly heavy for its size. Over 200 million years ago, it was a piece of a tree that shaped a river that's long since dried up. Now the organic matter is replaced by gorgeous silica-quartz from Triassic Period volcanic ash in various stages of crystallization. A variety of minerals swirl other-worldly colors through a strange piece of this world. It's small enough to carry out of here. Nobody will miss this one little piece.

**The problem is, you aren't the first person to have this idea.** The park has been losing 14 tons of petrified tree each year to theft, mostly one small piece at a time. But you don't know that, and when you finally get back to your car and get the air conditioner cranked, you're already daydreaming about showing off your trophy to friends.

In 2003, there was an unsustainable problem with theft of the The Petrified Forest National Park's namesake resource. Decision science researchers tested two thoughtfully crafted messages. Here's one of them:

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***"Many past visitors have removed the petrified wood from the park, changing the natural state of the Petrified Forest."***

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For some, this sobering reminder may be an

effective deterrent to theft. But this message fails to appeal to the way most people make decisions. **When this sign was posted, the volume of theft nearly tripled.**

This is primarily due to a decision reflex known as Negative Social Proof. All things being equal, people will tend to make the same decisions they believe others are making. By advertising that many others have stolen, this message establishes theft as the social norm, essentially inviting more of this undesirable behavior.

Negative social proof errors are sometimes more subtle, but still detrimental. For instance, every time we try to increase voter participation by sharing statistics about poor voter turnout, we make the problem worse. You may find the words "Most customers are still doing X, when they could be doing Y." nestled somewhere in your message and think it's helping light the path to your customer's exciting future. But most of your customers feel safest taking the same path as their peers.

Safety is one of our most basic needs. And the desire for safety often takes hold without us noticing. When others prove something won't hurt us, we tend to follow, rather than go through the process of proving some new thing is also safe.

There are many ways to use reflexes for gain as well. Why start out this guide with an example of a

detrimental reflex? I want you to take action.

I'm hoping you'll read this and feel a strong urge to review your own messages. And the best way I can ensure you'll do that is to help you avoid a loss.

People are much more motivated by [loss aversion](#) than the potential for gains.

In this guide, we'll discuss social proof, confirmation bias, anchoring, primacy effect, and a host of other reflexes of our decision centers. Decision reflexes are free tools you can use to help customers digest the same truths and form more favorable opinions.

As you internalize these reflexes, you will find that your messages are not only more persuasive, they are easier to come up with. The techniques themselves will inspire creativity.

This guide will help you decide:

- What statistics to share with prospects
- How many product lines to offer
- How to make prospects choose the product you most want them to pick
- How to price each product
- How to sell more of each product
- How to make prospects more accepting of those costs

As you learn the techniques, you will recognize their use more and more. Just today, I saw soup on sale with a "10 item limit" and smiled knowingly (See: [Scarcity](#)). You might smile more too.



# Help Customers Decide

## **I recently shopped for home stereo speakers. The options seemed endless.**

Each brand had provided plenty of features for me to compare. But none of them made it easier for me to make a decision. So I put it off, hoping it would be easier to decide later. I was fooling myself. More time didn't help me decide. It just reduced my passion for the product. Other priorities took over.

You've probably been in the same boat before.

Faced with a tough decision, you have put it off and let yourself pretend that it might be easier to decide later, after you have had some time to process the options.

Often, you don't come back to it. Your priorities have shifted. Your passion has waned. Whatever seemed so important a couple weeks ago, when you were "in shopping mode," no longer feels so important.

Your customers may feel the same way. In fact, one of the greatest competitors your business faces may be the inaction of potential customers who put off the decision and never come back to it.

In this section, we'll discuss how to make your customers' decisions much easier to make so that they feel compelled to buy from you today.

**Reduce the number of options** - It's tempting to offer a product line for every possible preference, but that makes decisions harder for your customers. While an expansive set of options may help you attract attention, a focused set of fewer options will drive more sales. If the problem is too many competitors, help customers out by suggesting a couple of key competitors to compare you to. But don't get bogged down in features comparisons. Instead, emphasize no more than three advantages of your product that the customer might feel they can't live without. (See: [Paradox of Choice](#))

**Offer a middle tier product** - When it comes to pricing, customers have an aversion to both extremes. If you offer multiple products, make the product that you want to sell the most of your middle-priced option. If you currently have a low-end product and a premium product, and you want to sell more of your premium product, here's the solution: Introduce an ultra-premium product. This is most effective if the middle price is exactly the average of the higher and lower prices. (See: [Extremeness Aversion](#))

**Promote your most popular product** - If you offer multiple products, let your customers know which one is most popular. It does more than help them decide which of your products to buy. It helps them decide to buy at all, to buy faster, and to not put off the decision. (See: [Social Proof](#))

**Be popular** - Customers feel much safer buying something that is popular. Tell them how many customers you have. If that's not an impressive number, find statistics that suggest products like yours are popular or gaining popularity. Numbers not in your favor? Segment and reevaluate. Is your product or industry gaining popularity among women in their 30s? Say so. (See: [Social Proof](#))

**Create a “good value” feeling** - Often customers don't have a price in mind, or even a frame of reference for fair pricing. But they want to feel like they got a good relative value, and once they get

that “good value” feeling, they have a much easier time making a decision. You can give them that good feeling without any significant change in your price by using [anchoring](#), [charm pricing](#), and [scarcity](#).

**Share a relatively high number** - Before sharing the price of your product, find creative ways to work larger numbers into the conversation. A simple example is to share a suggested retail price and then share your lower price. In a spoken negotiation, you might say, “For what you need, I don't think we even need to go as high as \$10,000,” and then tell them your price is \$5,999. It can also help if you mention a large, unrelated number. Seriously. Number relativity is so internal that we don't notice ourselves making comparisons that have no contextual relevance. (See: [Anchoring](#))

**End your price with 9s** - Don't charge \$1200 if you can charge \$1199. Charm pricing has a significant impact on customers' sense that a product is priced at a value. (See: [Charm Pricing](#))

**Limit the Quantity** - Limit the quantity you are willing to sell to any one customer. When people see “limit of 10” next to a sale price, they assume the value is so good that people would stock up if they were allowed to. (See: [Scarcity](#))

**Position your offer as a way to avoid loss** - I could tell you that these tips may help increase your sales, and that's true and somewhat persuasive.

But if I, instead, tell you that you may be losing sales by not applying these tips, your brain goes into loss prevention mode and that makes the decision feel more urgent. (See: [Loss Aversion](#))

**Play hard to get** - Remember, you're competing against inaction. Decisions are hard. If people think they can put this decision off, they will. So make this seem like a fleeting opportunity. Offer a limited time discount. If there are a limited quantity of your products available, tell your customers that. If you're selling a service, consider whether an enrollment deadline is appropriate. (See: [Scarcity](#))

**Validate your customer** - Customers are receptive to validation. If I tell you, "you seem like the kind of person that reads the whole article, takes notes, and uses what you learned," it reminds you of your aspirational self, and you are more likely to act accordingly.

**Present the stakes** - Remind your customer that the stakes are high by presenting a story rather than a list of features. For help building a compelling story, see the Persuasion Framework - Engage white paper. (See: [Engage with Story Templates](#))

As you develop your messages, refer back to this list. Not every tip will be applicable for your business. But the more you can apply, the easier your customer's decision will be.

**One of the greatest competitors** your business faces may be the inaction of potential customers who put off the decision and never come back to it.



# Satisfice Customers

Are you in a race with competitors to make the boldest claims and tout the longest list of features?

There's a better race to be in that benefits you and your customers equally: The Race For Clarity.

Customers can buy from a company that articulates challenges and offers a succinct solution. Or they can buy from a company that offers the longest list of features. The choice may not seem clear to us as business owners. That's because most business owners and marketers tend to be maximizers with regards to our areas of specialty. But most customers are satisficers.

## **Maximizers / Satisficers**

Maximizers relentlessly compare details and weigh every pro and con. Satisficers seek a viable solution to their problem at a fair price. They have more important things to do than study the competitive landscape of your industry.

When your message reads as a long list of features,

you're asking way too much of your satisficer customers. You are asking them to read a plotless story, to process and aggregate a list of features, and to interpret that those features, collectively, will serve to solve a problem for them.

Your customer does not have time or energy to commit to that mental leap. If you aren't talking about the problem you can solve for your customer, your list of features is meaningless noise.

**Satisficers tend to be happier with their purchase decisions and more loyal to brands.**

In fact, according to [research by Linda Lai](#):

*Despite their efforts to choose the best of all available solutions, maximizers seem to be more inclined than satisficers to regret their choices and to experience post-decisional dissonance.*

*Maximizers may therefore be expected to change their decisions more frequently and hence exhibit **lower customer loyalty** to providers of products and services compared to satisficers.*

If you are a marketer, you've probably targeted your message to demographics that may be more likely to buy. But what if you could target a broad audience with a faster sales cycle, that is easier to please, retain, and get a positive review out of?

*You can.*

### Positivity Bias

Skeptics are often the loudest voice in the room. But skepticism is actually not the status quo behavior. Most people overwhelmingly expect good things to occur and suffer from an "expectation violation" when neutral or bad things occur instead.

Don't include every detail of your business on your website. By leaving some of your offering up to the imagination of the customer, you invite romantic optimism into the story.

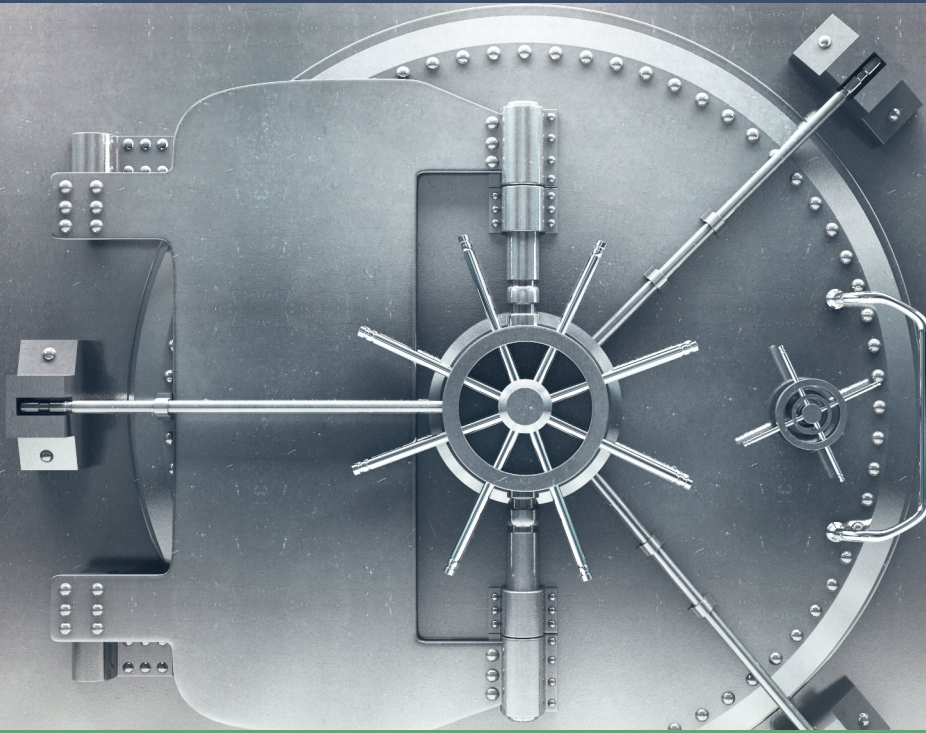
This also allows your sales person to frame the fiddly bits of your offer for optimal effect. And that's a big deal because of positivity bias. Customers tend to evaluate individual people positively even when they have negative or skeptical feelings about the group they belong to. This reflex gives your sales person an advantage over your website, particularly in cases where the customer is skeptical about your business or industry.

### This is Good News

Satisficer make for happier customers. They don't require spin. They want a clear solution, an approachable plan, and some evidence that your product is a safe bet (a [social proof](#) statement is great for that).

## Satisficers want:

- A clear solution
- An approachable plan
- A safe bet



# Change a Customer's Mind

**Sometimes, you face up against a customer who has already made the wrong choice.** If you want to change this customer's mind, you will need to dig deep.

## **Go Tribal**

Research the customer and find his or her hobbies. Look for passions and interests you share. When you contact the customer, see if you can start a conversation about the common interest. Handle this with caution and awareness of the context. If the customer feels like you have information you shouldn't have or that is too personal, this strategy could backfire.

But if you can bond over your mutual love of mountain biking, travel, or music, your

relationship will shift. You will be selling as one member of a tribe to another.

That's great for one-on-one sales. But what if you're marketing to a large group whose opinions you want to change? The same idea could apply. If a large set of your customers loves mountain biking, then try creating ads that align your product with mountain biking culture. If you sell video conferencing software, then show a celebrity mountain biker using your software to keep in touch with her family from the top of her favorite downhill course.

## **Be Interrogative**

Research has revealed two truths that can work in your favor:

Most people assume they understand the world in far greater detail than they do.

People tend to rate their understanding of a subject significantly lower after they try to explain it.

This is called [The Illusion of Explanatory Depth](#).

You can harness this reflex by explaining less and asking questions more. If your customer says she is happy with another vendor, ask for more information about the other vendor.

Be respectful in your questioning. Likability is your ally. As the customer makes valid points, or you find any common ground, take a moment to concede those points.

Resist the urge to offer up contrary arguments.

This works best one-on-one, but if you need to operate at scale, consider creating an online survey. Ask questions that make customers have to dig deep to explain their preference. And make sure you have a way to follow-up with the participants.

### **Establish Empathy**

Now you may begin to pitch your product.

As you go, find a charming way to ask the customers to repeat back your selling points. As the words come out of their mouths, instead of

yours, a funny thing will happen. They will make and reinforce logical connections in their heads and establish empathy for your POV.

### **Create Healthy Distance**

Particularly during a heated debate, people tend to amplify the degree to which their opinions define them.

Help your customer build distance between himself and the opinion you want to change by weaving other topics into the conversation.

### **Change The Game**

It would take a Herculean effort for most people to admit that their long-held opinions were wrong the whole time. So, you need to give your customer an out. Introduce some new underlying information, something that has not always been a factor, that changes everything.



# Influence

In his book, [\*Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion\*](#), Dr. Robert Cialdini suggests that there are seven key principles of influence:

**1. Social Proof** - People feel most safe doing what many other people have done. For instance, when I tell you that Dr. Robert Cialdini's book has sold over 3 million copies, it makes you feel more confident about these seven principles. (See: [Social Proof](#))

**2. Authority** - When I tell you that [Fortune](#) magazine lists Dr. Cialdini's book in their "75 Smartest Business Books," it gives you greater confidence, not just because of the accolade itself, but also because of the authority Fortune magazine's brand brings to that accolade. Now you see Dr. Cialdini as an authority as well, and are more likely to trust and respond to his input. Authority, reciprocity, and unity are the

fundamental reasons content marketing is an effective strategy, as we'll discuss further in the Court and Close steps of the Persuasion Framework.

**3. Reciprocity** - We are hard-wired to return favors. When a business gives us a free sample, or even free and useful information, we are more likely to want to give them something back--like our business. (See: [Reciprocity](#))

**4. Liking** - We are more likely to buy from people we like. This is part of the reason networking conferences provide an edge to participants, and why the golf-course business deal works. Want to be more likable? Listen to your customers. Compliment them. Match their speaking rhythm, phrasing and body language. Revisit the relationship regularly. Familiarity builds likability.

**5. Scarcity** - When a resource is in limited supply or fleeting availability, customers want it more. Scarcity is one of the most effective reflexes for helping customers make decisions faster. It's also an effective tool for increasing the perceived value of your product or service.

(See: [Scarcity](#))

**6. Consistency** - Once customers make a small commitment, they are more likely to remain consistent to that commitment. Start with a small, easy, low-stakes commitment from your customer and build from there.

**7. Unity** - Create a sense that you and your customer are part of a common tribe. Use language that makes the customer feel like part of your family, engage with them about common hobbies and shared passions, and include them in your creative process (See: [IKEA Effect](#)).

**There are many more decision reflexes that can help you guide customers.** The next section of this document is an index of some of the most powerful and applicable reflexes, and shares some of the research behind these powerful forces.

**When a resource is in limited supply or fleeting availability, customers want it more.** Scarcity is one of the most effective reflexes for helping customers make decisions faster.

# Decision Reflex Index

## Primacy Effect

**In a 1946 experiment**, Solomon Asch described an anonymous person as **intelligent, industrious, impulsive, critical, stubborn, and envious**.

He provided that description to a first group of participants. To a second group of participants, he described the anonymous person using the same adjectives, but in the reverse order: **envious, stubborn, critical, impulsive, industrious, and intelligent**.

He asked individuals from each group to describe the anonymous person in their own words. Most participants who heard the negative adjectives first gave a negative description. Those who heard the positive adjectives first, tended to give a positive description.

So, order matters.

Think about that. Your customers will form different opinions depending on the order in which you present information to them--even if the information is otherwise identical.

Moreover, those initial opinions tend to be long-lasting because of confirmation bias.

The first thing people learn about your product or services becomes the foundation for anything they learn after. Go to great lengths to control that first experience.

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## Confirmation Bias

**It's tempting to believe** that customers come to your website, carefully read, review and weigh your offering, and then make informed decisions.

What actually happens is that customers form opinions lightning fast, establish emotional commitments to those opinions, and then seek out and organize facts to support what they want to believe. That reflex customers have to seek out affirmations of their existing opinions is called confirmation bias.

What you want is for your customers to form instant positive emotional commitments to your brand so that they read your message with optimistic abandon and want to believe.

Alternatively, if a customer forms a negative emotional commitment, you can end up with a skeptic skimming through your message looking for gotchas and assuming the worst.

In Step 3 of the Persuasion Framework, you will learn to address Confirmation Bias by winning favor and establishing serendipity as quickly as possible. This is where UX and graphic design are critically

important to the success of your message.

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## Social Proof

Social Proof can be one of the easiest and most intuitive reflexes to leverage in your marketing, and you see it used every day.

Most people, at least unconsciously, want to do what most people do. It's a useful shortcut to research in a world full of complex options. And **It's safe.**

Safety is one of our most fundamental needs. The desire for safety often takes hold without us noticing. When others prove something won't hurt us, we tend to follow their lead, rather than go through the process of proving some new thing is also safe.

**Position your business as a safe bet.** Tell customers how many customers you have. If you don't have many, tell customers how popular products/services *like yours* are. If those numbers are not in your favor, segment and reevaluate. Is your product or industry gaining popularity among men in their 20s? Say so.

Want to sell more of your most popular product? Make sure your customers know it is your most popular product. It will help them decide *faster* too.

**Make sure social proof is encouraging the desired behavior.** Check your copy for any sentence that starts with "Most customers..." Make sure the end of that sentence is a desired behavior. Here are two real world examples of **what not to do.**

- Wikipedia's current fundraising message indicates "99% of our readers don't give." *Ok, good. I'm safe.* If it's not clear why this statement is problematic, imagine if the opposite were true: "99% of our readers donate at least \$10." *Gosh, I don't want to be part of a tiny minority of subversive freeloaders.*
  - I, just now, got an email from a website designer who opened his offer with "Most people's websites are actually kinda horrible..." *Great. In that case, improving my website is not my highest priority--I'm safe.* Imagine if, instead, he said, "It's easier and less expensive than ever to get a great website, and most businesses are doing just that." Now he has my attention. If most businesses are doing this, I don't want to get left in the dust.
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## Anchoring

**When it comes to numbers,** relativity is key and order matters.

It's no surprise that lower prices capture the

attention of customers. What might surprise you is how easy it is to make your price *feel* like more of a bargain to your customer.

Give your customer a larger number as a reference price (an anchor!) first--and then introduce your price. If your price is \$5,000, you might say something like “For your needs, I don’t think we even need to go as high as \$10,000.” Then tell them your price is \$5,000. Scratch that. Tell them your price is \$4,999 (see: [Charm Pricing](#)).

**Even more surprising is that the anchor does not even need to be related to be effective.**

The original evidence of anchoring comes from a 1974 experiment by Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman. Participants in the experiment were asked to spin a wheel of fortune that was rigged to always stop on 10 or 65. Each participant was then asked a completely unrelated question: What percentage of United Nations members are from African countries. On average, those who had spun a 10 guessed **25%**, and those who had spun a 65 guessed **45%**. Wild.

You have probably shopped at a store that seems to always have a 40% off sale in progress. They do that because price anchoring works.

Anchoring presents a challenge for companies that offer both a low-end and high-end product. The price of the low-end product acts as an anchor for the premium product, making shoppers feel like

the premium product is overpriced.

But there’s a simple and effective solution to this problem (see: [Extremeness Aversion](#)).

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### **Extremeness Aversion**

**Most customers want to buy your middle-priced product.** If you are currently selling a low-end offering and a high-end offering, add an ultra-premium offering. Your old high-end offering becomes your middle-priced option, and **customers will buy more of it.**

Amos Tversky and Itamar Simonson quantified the effect of Extremeness Aversion with an experiment. Participants were asked to choose between two cameras priced at \$169.99 and \$239.99. The results were **50/50**.

A second test group was presented with three cameras at \$169.99, \$239.99, and \$469.99. **57% of the participants chose the middle-price option.** The rest were split evenly between the high and low end options.

Be thoughtful about how many options you introduce. A lot of options can help generate attention, but fewer options generate more sales (see: [Paradox of Choice](#)).

One last step: To sell even more of your middle-priced option and speed up the decision process for

your buyer, provide a [social proof](#) nudge. Let customers know it is the “most popular” option.

The Extremeness Aversion reflex is most effective when the middle-priced option is set at the exact average of the low-end and high-end prices.

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### **Pratfall Effect**

The originating 1966 research by psychologist Elliot Aronson established that people who show their flaws (even accidentally) are seen as more likable. Since then, the Pratfall Effect has been used to explain the success of ad campaigns that have succeeded by emphasizing a flaw.

In 1959, Doyle Dane Bernbach developed a successful campaign for Volkswagen with headlines like “It’s ugly but it gets you there.” And “A VW won’t go over 72 mph.”

Avis rental cars, challenged with a leading competitor in Hertz, pivoted from steady losses to a seven figure annual profit after advertising that “When you’re only number two you try harder. Or else.” They continued to run with this approach for 50 years.

Whether customers respond to the humanity of the flaw, the humor of it, or if it just helps them believe the brand is being honest, the Pratfall Effect can be quite effective. Pick the right tone for your brand first. If a little self-deprecating humor

fits within that tone, give it a try. Or, try a more subtle approach and acknowledge a limitation of your business.

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### **Cocktail Party Effect**

The world is full of noise. It is now, and always has been, essential to our sanity to tune most of it out. And yet, in a crowded and noisy room, we are somehow able to focus in to a single conversation. And we manage to hear our names mentioned through a soup of auditory inputs.

What captures our attention is content that gives us a feeling of serendipity--an indication that we have stumbled upon something specifically about or for us.

You don't have much time to capture attention. And if you fail here, the message is lost. It's just more noise. Capture attention with personalization, localization, validation, and/or by immediately and vividly addressing the problem or aspiration of your ideal customer through language, imagery, or both.

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### **Reciprocity**

We are hard-wired to return favors. When a business gives us a free sample, or even free and useful information, we are more likely to want to give them something back--like our business.

Research has shown that simply leaving a piece of candy with the bill can generate a significant increase in tips for a waiter.

For service-based businesses, a free initial consultation is an effective way to reduce the barrier to an initial decision. For best results, go beyond a sales pitch in this first consultation and deliver some small but valuable insight or service to the customer for free.

Reciprocity is one of the foundations for content marketing. Share blogs, white papers, videos and other high value content with potential customers for free and they will feel the reflex to offer something in return.

In the Court step of the Persuasion Framework, we will discuss best practices for requesting customer contact information (in exchange for high value content) in a way that maximizes the reciprocity reflex.

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### Loss Aversion

If you aren't leveraging decision reflexes in your messages, your marketing investment may be **going to waste**.

That stings a little, right? I want you to take action. I'm hoping you'll read this and feel a strong urge to review your own messages. And the best way I can ensure you'll do that is to frame it as an

opportunity to avoid a loss.

People are much more motivated by loss aversion than the potential for gains.

Imagine that the U.S. is preparing for the outbreak of an unusual Asian disease, which is **expected to kill 600 people**.

Two options to combat the disease have been proposed::

- If **Program A** is adopted, 200 people will be **saved**.
- If **Program B** is adopted, there is a one-third probability that 600 people will be saved and a two-thirds probability that no people will be saved.

### Which program would you pick?

That's [the question](#) psychologists Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky asked participants in a 1984 experiment. If you picked Program A, you are aligned with 72% of the participants in that first experiment group. A second group of participants was given these options:

- If **Program C** is adopted, 400 people will **die**.
- If **Program D** is adopted, there is a one-third probability that nobody will die and a two-thirds probability that 600 people will die.

Only 22% chose Program C.

Program A (favored by 72%) and Program C (favored by 22%) save and lose the same number of people.

The only difference is the way the options are framed to focus on **gain** (Program A) or **loss** (Program C).

Recent research suggests that potential losses stir up more brain activity, particularly in the emotional and reactive centers of the brain that are central to our decision making processes.

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## Scarcity

When a resource is in limited supply or fleeting availability, our scarcity reflex kicks in. You've seen this everywhere.

- The “only 3 remaining” badge on e-commerce sites
- Every limited time only sale, with Black Friday being the canonic example
- The last few bottles of milk at the grocery store as a winter storm is looming
- An enrollment period or deadline for signing up

Scarcity triggers the [loss aversion](#) reflex. It's an especially effective tool for helping customers make decisions more quickly, especially when it is

coupled with a “good value” feeling.

In 1975, Stephen Worchel asked 134 students to rate the quality and value of a batch of cookies. Some of the students were presented with 10 cookies in a glass jar. Others were presented with 2 cookies in a glass jar. The result: Students presented with 2 cookies gave significantly higher ratings and were prepared to **pay 11% more for them** than their 10 cookie counterparts.

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## Paradox of Choice

As a business leader, one of the hardest things to do is stay focused on a single, simple product. Every piece of feedback leads you to believe there is an audience you should be catering to in a different way.

When deciding how many options to present, consider this: **More options tend to generate more attention. But fewer options lead to more sales.**

In one of the most famous experiments in decision science, Sheena Iyengar set up a tasting booth for jams at a grocery store. Sometimes the booth displayed 24 different jams, and sometimes only 6.

When 24 jam varieties were displayed, 60% of shoppers visited the booth--compared to only 40% when 6 varieties were displayed. **More options generated more attention.**

Each person who visited the booth left with a \$1 off coupon. From the group that saw 24 varieties, only 3% redeemed those coupons (made a jam purchase). Thirty percent of the people who saw 6 varieties redeemed their coupons. **Fewer options lead to more sales.**

“When it comes down to making a choice, we don’t want that choice to be too hard or too conflict-ridden or too burdensome.” - Sheena Iyengar

One way you can help remove conflict and burden from your customers is to tell them which of your products is the most popular. (See: [Social Proof](#))

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### The Illusion of Explanatory Depth

Research has revealed two truths that can work in your favor:

1. Most people assume they understand the world in far greater detail than they do.
2. People tend to rate their understanding of a subject significantly lower after they try to explain it.

In 2002, Leonid Rozenblit and Frank Keil ran a three phase study.

1. First, participants were asked to rate their level of understanding of how a variety of household products work.

2. Next, participants were asked to write a detailed explanation of how each product works.
3. Finally, participants were asked, once again, to rate their understanding of how each product works.

Participants’ self-ratings dropped dramatically after they attempted to provide detailed explanations.

You can harness this reflex by explaining less and asking questions more. For instance, if your customer says they are happy with another vendor, ask for more information about the other vendor. In their explanation, they may come to realize they do not have much information to base that preference on.

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### The IKEA Effect

**Here’s the thing--**that arts and crafts project your nephew made you for your birthday is important. When people are involved in making things themselves, they value those things more. In fact, they believe those things to be more valuable than equivalent professionally made things--**and they expect you to believe that too.** Harness that.

Engage with your customers to inform your products and services. Ask for their input. Flatter them that they had a hand in informing your best ideas. Crowdfund early versions of products. Personalize the product.

The IKEA effect was given its name by Michael I. Norton, Daniel Mochon, and Dan Ariely of Duke in 2011.

In the 1950's, cake mix sales increased after Betty Crocker added a step to the recipe. By requiring that home bakers add a freshly cracked egg to the mix, they increased the creative investment of the participants.

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### **Charm Pricing**

End your price with a 9.

Gumroad is a website that lets creators sell products directly to the public. In 2013, Gumroad did an analysis of pricing on their website, focusing on items priced under \$6. The conversion rate for items with prices ending in 99 cents, rather than a whole dollar figure, was **51% higher**.

If you're questioning whether the same effect extends beyond the \$6 price, go ahead and do some shopping at Apple. Everything from a \$0.99 (or \$1.29) song download to a \$2,799 MacBook Pro is sold at a charm price.

Particularly for smaller businesses, charm pricing can feel awkwardly salesy. But can you really afford to miss out on a 51% boost in conversions? Consider the extraordinary efforts you may have made to increase conversion rates in the past. This one is free and simple.

## **Can you really afford to miss out on a 51% boost in conversions?**

Consider the extraordinary efforts you have made to increase conversion rates in the past.

# Persuasion Framework

## RECAP

**The Persuasion Framework** presents the research-backed and time-tested techniques of three key disciplines: Story-telling, decision science, and UX design.

You probably already leverage best practices from at least one of these disciplines. They are most effective in combination.

Start by building your core brand message (see our [Persuasion Framework - Engage](#) guide). Then go back and look for opportunities to leverage decision reflexes to make the message even more persuasive.

- Try weaving a social proof statement into your brand message. This typically goes right after you share your plan, offer, or solution.
- Frame your message as a safe bet and a way to avoid a loss.
- Carefully consider the number of options you present, and optimize the pricing.
- Give customers a “good value” feeling.
- Give the offer a sense of urgency with a fleeting opportunity.

Take these steps, and your customers will be more likely to buy--and to buy faster.

**Want help? Bruck Marketing** offers workshops to help build your brand message and bring your marketing foundation to life.

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