

LESSON-7  
PERSUASIVE TALK

**PERSUADING OTHERS**

Many business situations require you to persuade others. You may want to persuade your supervisor to approve an equipment purchase, a customer to purchase your products, a coworker to help you complete a project, a supplier to speed up delivery, or your assistant to put in extra time on a special project.

***CASE SCENARIO***

***A Plan to Persuade***

Ben Erickson, Inventory Manager for the B&J Exporting Company, needed a minicomputer. In the past year, B&J had doubled the number of products it inventoried and added 100 customers and a second warehouse. Ben and his two assistants processed all their information on only three small personal computers. To keep up the present pace and future growth, they needed a more powerful computer. But the senior vice president, Linda Jefferson, recently announced that she was cutting all equipment budgets for the rest of the year.

Ben asked his assistants, Christine Rodgers and Mike Gorham, to meet with him right away. He explained the situation, adding, "Linda is a very reasonable person. But she'll need to be persuaded. We need to figure out the best way to go about this."

Mike offered, "I think it would be good to talk to her about how the company will benefit you know, how we'll save money and improve inventory control."

"Mike's right," said Chris. "We really need a plan. If we just go in there and say, 'We need a \$12,000 minicomputer,' she'll laugh us out of her office!"

"That's for sure,!" agreed Ben. "We *do* need a plan to persuade her."

"Why don't we make a list of the benefits for the company," Mike suggested.

Ben, Christine, and Mike completed the following checklist. In the process, they discovered an excellent option: leasing rather than buying. They agreed that leasing would be better for the company, and Linda would surely prefer the lower monthly cost.

*Cost of computer: \$12,000 (tax, service contract?)*

*Benefits: Processing Speed will greatly improve (How much?)*

*Problems: Moratorium on purchasing equipment*

*Other options: Hire additional people on temporary basis when needed? (What will the downtime be fore training? How efficient would this be?)*

**Hang in there until end of fiscal year (Can we realistically do this for 7 months?)**

*Lease? (\$375 per month x u = \$2,625. Can continue leasing next year at same cost or reevaluate computer needs for next fiscal year.)*

Ben was able to use the list to prepare a persuasive talk to use when bringing the matter up with Linda. As a result, he won Linda's approval for leasing the minicomputers.

What did you notice about how Ben went about dealing with his problem? Did he get what he'd originally wanted? Why was he effective?

Speaking for the purpose of persuading someone is one of the most difficult communication processes. Each situation requires a different approach-and probably several different approaches. Moreover, the listener's response to one approach often forces you to take another approach, making perfect planning impossible. Nonetheless, with careful planning, you will be comfortable approaching your topic from several different angles. For example, if Linda had become intrigued with the minicomputer's capabilities, Ben should have been able to elaborate. Otherwise, Linda may not have been convinced that a minicomputer, purchased *or* leased, was necessary.

### **The Keys to Preparing a Persuasive Talk**

Whatever the situation, the keys to preparing a persuasive talk are:

- 1. Understand your goals clearly.** Know which of your goals are most important and which you are willing to compromise-and to what extent.
- 2. Understand your listeners' needs and goals.** Anticipate how your listeners will respond to each of your arguments. Use your best arguments first and be ready to give something in return for meeting your goals.
- 3. Focus on your listeners' counterarguments.** Understand their reasons for accepting or not accepting your arguments, and use their arguments to direct your own.
- 4. Be prepared.** Have at your command all the facts, statistics, and arguments that might persuade your listeners. Consider how you might use data to strengthen your position and address your listeners' questions and concerns.

As you can see, being persuasive requires planning and control, even in the least formal situations.

## **IN BRIEF**

1. Many speaking situations—phone calls, meetings, discussions, and so on—can be planned and controlled for increased effectiveness and efficiency.
2. You can plan for passing on information and making requests by listing and organizing your information ahead of time.
3. You can plan for responding to questions and requests by allowing specific questions and requests to direct your research and organize your response.
4. You can plan for directing others by listing information ahead of time, by including an explanation of the need for the directions, by giving directions their proper emphasis, and by following up to see whether people are following directions.
5. You can plan to persuade by considering all the information and arguments that might persuade your listener and by preparing counter-arguments to those your listener might use, showing how your point of view benefits your listener.

## **WORDS OF NOTE**

Define each of these terms introduced in Chapter 6.

### **direct persuade**

## **CHECK YOUR RECALL**

1. What are two general benefits of planning for informal speaking situations?
2. What are some questions to ask yourself in order to be intentional about your oral communication?
3. What is the best planning technique to use when you need to relay information to someone?
4. What are some simple planning techniques you might use for responding to questions or requests?
5. What are some guidelines to follow when making a spoken request?
6. When your purpose is to direct others, what questions should you keep in mind to help your listener?
7. What are the keys to preparing a persuasive talk?

## SHARE YOUR PERSPECTIVE

Plan your conversations in the following situations. Be ready to discuss why you planned as you did. When you have finished planning, choose a classmate and role-play these conversations. Be ready to evaluate your planning based on the role playing.

1. Your new assistant came highly recommended. Shortly after he started, however, he had 'some personal problems that interfered with his work. As far as you know, he has gotten his personal life back on track, but his work has never returned to the level you saw when he started. He is sometimes late for work and sometimes leaves early. He sometimes extends his breaks and lunch hour. Routine tasks such as filing and mailing seem to take longer to finish. And he seems to work less independently now, relying on you for many simple, routine decisions that he used to make. You decide to talk with him to try to improve his performance.
2. You're swamped at work, and your boss asks you to respond to an unusual request made by a client. The client has numerous questions about your local area computer network because she is considering networking her office as well. Your boss hands you the client's letter and says, "Try to get a response in the mail by tomorrow afternoon." You know you are not the best person to handle this request because you will simply have to go to the on-site computer coordinator to get the information. Maybe the computer coordinator would be willing to write this letter, or at least a rough draft, for you.

## USE YOUR JUDGMENT

Discuss the information and arguments you might use to be persuasive in the following situations. Talk about all the possibilities for negotiating an agreement:

- a. You can use vacation time only when your colleague Jane Wilcox is at work. At the last minute, you feel you must request a vacation day for this Friday due to a family situation you must handle, but Jane has been planning that day off for weeks and has already submitted the request. When you explain the situation to Jane, she says, "I'm sorry. I've been planning this day for weeks. I don't get enough time off as it is, and I'm swamped with work right now. I really need the time."
- b. To try to be fair in improving the company's cash flow, your vice president trimmed 15% off each department's budget. Because of this, your company has two people, you and a" coworker, assigned to do what four people should be doing in the production department. Your work is getting done; however, it is getting done late, and customer complaints about quality and promptness have increased. The sales staff is even complaining about production's slowdown. What's worse, the research and development department has introduced two new products in the past two months, products you have to learn about and produce on

top of your other work. You set up a meeting with the vice president to see if there is some other way to handle the budget cuts.