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# ADVOCACY:

The Lessons Learned and Next Steps



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## THE BOTTOM LINE:

### Lesson One:

*"Insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results." –Albert Einstein*

### Lesson Two:

The relationship is the message.

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- The Four Critical and Unique Responsibilities of Your Board
- Advocacy
  - What it is and is not.
  - Lessons you need to know.
  - And a few more thoughts...
- Leadership
  - A commonly accepted definition.
  - Linking leadership, advocacy and influence.
  - Governance as leadership.
- Influence and Persuasion
  - Seven principles that work.
  - Principles to build, maintain and repair relationships.
  - Principles to use in a time of uncertainty.
  - Principles to move people to action.
  - Bringing unity and togetherness.
  - And a few more thoughts...
- You Need a Plan!
- Conclusions and Actions.



## **You and your Board have many roles and responsibilities.**

But if you were to determine the bottom line, the unique and essential tasks for a not-for-profit board, you would do well to know and remember these four as pivotal.

These form the backbone of governance as leadership.

- 1** You set strategic direction on behalf of your community.
  - This is creating the organization's identity as you establish its vision, mission, and values as well as plans for the next period of time.
- 2** You develop a critical, constructive, creative partnership with your Chief Executive Officer to ensure sound organizational management and leadership and that your plans and policies are implemented.
  - You cannot be a great board with impact without this partnership with your CEO.
- 3** You ensure sustainable resources.
  - Sustainable and sustaining. Why? to achieve your mission. We used to call this advocacy but advocacy is a process, not a result.
- 4** You monitor, evaluate and audit, both programs and services and finances. Some call this, again, providing oversight, both programmatic and financial.
  - You may not do the actual work but you certainly want to see results and impact for the work that is done.

### **Here we will focus on the third function:**

### **Ensuring sustainable resources, through advocacy and influence.**

Good governance used to focus on advocacy as a primary role for the Board.  
But to what end?

This role has changed to ensuring sustainable resources for the organization – in order to achieve your mission.

Advocacy is but one approach. Fund development is another.

Grants. Lobbying. Fees and charges might be another.

The end result is revenue. The reason is the importance of your mission.



## ADVOCACY

*is a planned, deliberate, sustained effort to develop understanding and support incrementally over time.*

-Ken Haycock

### Advocacy is a

**planned**

- (do you have a plan?),

**deliberate**

- (do you provide training and funding? accountability?),

**sustained**

- (it is part of the ongoing role of the board and staff),

**effort**

- (are you prepared to put in the work?)

**to develop understanding**

- (build knowledge before making requests, deposits before withdrawals)

**and support**

- (to advance your mission, often through shared goals)

**incrementally**

- (one small brick contributes to the bridge)

**over time**

- (it will pay off at surprising times, sometimes over longer periods).

Advocacy is thus a means, not the end, for the Board.

It is part of your Board's leadership responsibilities.

Advocacy is often confused with lobbying, with marketing, with publicity and public relations. Even with "ambassadorship".

These are important but not the same.

Advocacy is very much connected to leadership, and thus to influence.





## FIRST, A FEW LESSONS FROM RESEARCH IN ADVOCACY

Well, there are some basic lessons learned from the research on advocacy.

### ***You need to connect your agenda***

with the agenda of funders and policymakers. You need to know their agenda. Priorities.

### ***Decision-makers do things for their reasons, not yours.***

You need to know their reasons.

If they are politicians, they want to make a contribution by making good policy and satisfying their constituents. Let's recognize here that their idea of "good" policy may not be the same as yours.

### ***It is all about respect,***

if only that the other person, or "target," has the money and the power.

Bashing, shaming, public humiliation do not typically win friends or influence people. Our research found that politicians and their senior bureaucrats had long memories about groups that had shamed and blamed them for something even 15 years previously!

Politicians want to make good decisions and satisfy their constituents and be re-elected. Don't threaten them by suggesting that you won't vote for them when you never did. It becomes laughable.

### ***You need to develop positive relationships.***

#### ***It is also much like banking -***

you can't make a withdrawal (the ask) if you've never made a deposit.

#### ***You need to educate and support before you ever make the ask.***

(even better support or advance the agenda of the target without asking for anything).

## A FEW MORE?

### **Transformations > Transactions**

We need to focus on the transformations that we make possible as not-for-profit entities, our impact rather than transactions, the numbers of people who walk through our doors or attend our events.

We talk about our clients, our services, our use.  
But what are our KSFs? Our Key Success Factors?  
Benefits. Outcomes. Impact.

Speak to our importance as critical Infrastructure –  
necessary, not merely nice to have.  
Look to the future rather than past.  
And strive to provide a return on investment (for my priorities  
as a funder)  
not simply appealing to altruism for others.

And yes, it is a ROI Return on Investment. As a funder, whether  
donor, philanthropist, politician, bureaucrat, there are many  
calls on time, attention and funds. Where will I get the biggest  
return for my agenda, priorities, values, beliefs...

### **Not your job?**

We hear this too often but we can no longer say “it is not my  
job” to advocate for the organization (it is, else why you are  
there?),  
or that you lack competence (then get some training),  
or that there is no plan (then develop one).

Talk is not influence.  
And there is no silver bullet, no quick fix.  
This a part of your organizational culture.  
You can't say “We did advocacy last year and it didn't work.”

Accept that influence, and thus relationships, play a major role.  
Take time, making deposits but also recognizing the need to  
make the specific ask.





## SO...

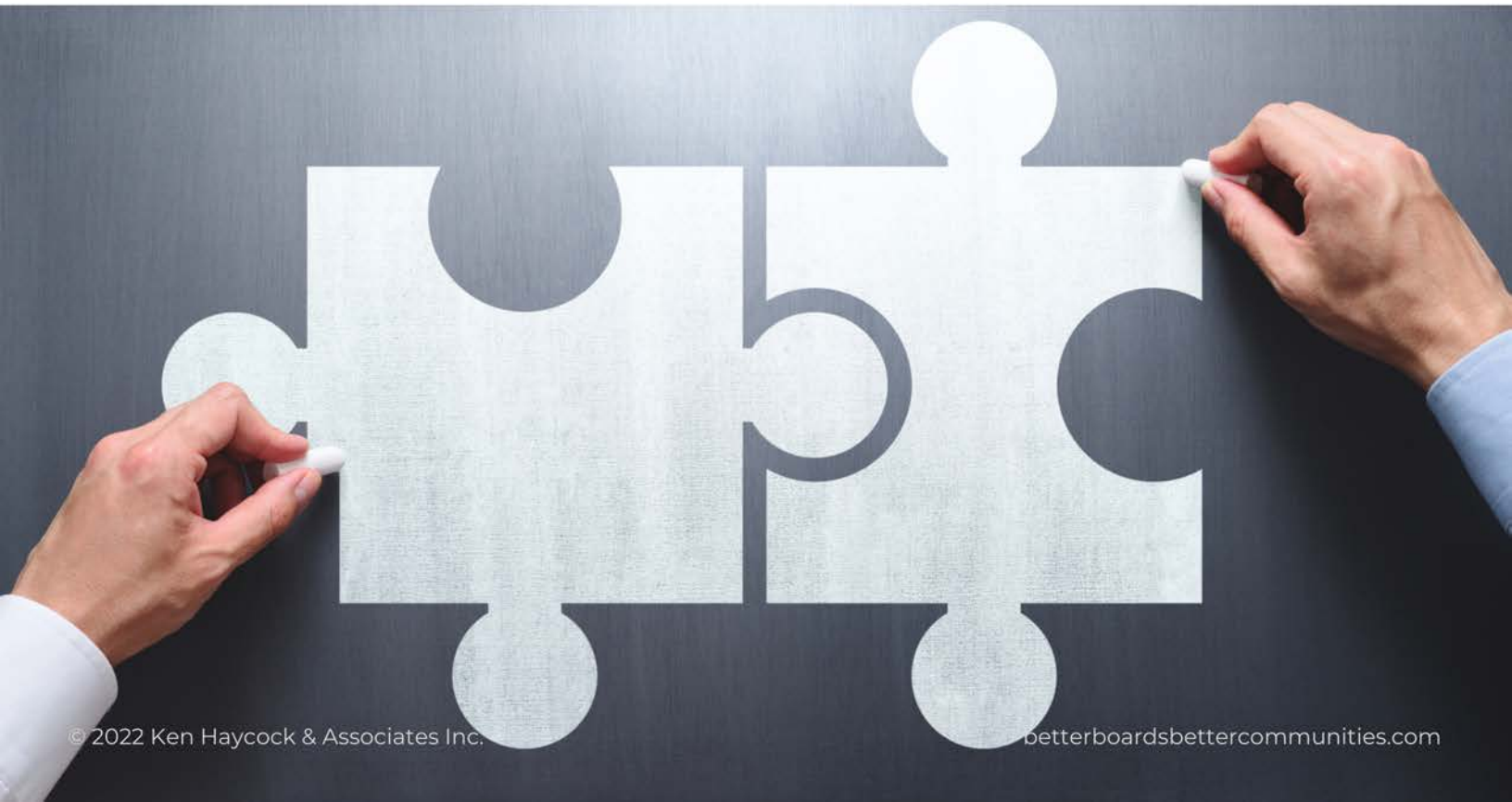
- it is about advocacy and leadership... relationships and influence...
- it is understanding the target – their values, networks, connections, promises, colleagues, context...
- it is understanding the varied tactics and strategies and choosing appropriately and strategically...
- it is part of life in the organization and should be funded, supported, and measured...

## BECAUSE...

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**Bottom line:  
the relationship is the message...**

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**Advocacy is a critical piece of governance as leadership.**

## LEADERSHIP

*is a process of social influence through which one person is able to enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task.*

-Martin Chemers



So both advocacy and leadership are about targets, about group process, about influence, moving a decision-maker to provide funding or make good policy to advance our mission.

**So, what causes one person to say yes to another person?**

**Here are some basic principles, based on research and evidence.**



## SEVEN UNIVERSAL PRINCIPLES FOR PERSUASION AND INFLUENCE

1. Reciprocity.
2. Liking.
3. Authority.
4. Social Proof of Consensus.
5. Commitment and Consistency.
6. Scarcity.
7. Unity.

These seven (formerly six) principles were first developed by Robert Cialdini from his studies of sales. Dr. Cialdini has written several important books on the topic with examples of how these principles affect your behaviors and responses in daily life. Here are a few.

Ken Haycock and Cheryl Stenstrom subsequently applied Cialdini's theory to the political environment, with both elected politicians and senior staff at the municipal and provincial/state levels and with national associations.

There's no one principle that is more powerful or effective than others.

Each of them will be more powerful in a different context. You have to change your approach depending on the situation

**But they work.**



# THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES EXPLAINED BRIEFLY

## Two Are for Building, Maintaining and Repairing Relationships:

### **1. Reciprocity.**

We feel obliged to reciprocate when something is done for us. People feel especially obligated when you give first.

### **2. Liking.**

If people think that you like them, there is a better chance that they will listen. Find similarities to highlight.

## Two Are for Use in Times of Uncertainty:

### **3. Authority.**

Demonstrate your expertise, confidence, and trustworthiness. The Board has credibility as community representatives; the CEO has credibility as a subject matter expert. Recognize the difference. And use it.

### **4. Social Proof of Consensus.**

People follow the “many others” in their peer group. We tend to conform. This is a very common form of voluntary social compliance.

## Two Are for Moving People to Action:

### **5. Commitment and Consistency.**

We want to be consistent with our values and beliefs and our prior commitments and stated positions.

### **6. Scarcity.**

The less there is, the more we want it.  
But what constitutes scarce in the not-for-profit sector?



# TWO FOR BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS: BUILD, MAINTAIN, EVEN REPAIR...

## 1. Reciprocity

We feel obliged to reciprocate when something is done for us. People feel especially obligated when you give first. You, then me, then you...

So give information, service, and even concessions (for example, when you know a reduction in funding is coming anyway, make it easier).

Those who know how to network know that if you want to be influential with people you should not ask “Who can help me here?” You should ask “Whom can I help here?”

Especially important with reciprocation are gifts, if personalized and unexpected, and thus meaningful.

Gifts need not cost money: just recognizing someone publicly at an event is a gift to a politician or bureaucrat. Or talking with them when they are standing alone at a reception. Provide opportunities (photos at an event, for example).

And always, always work to connect agendas.

We don't believe it but we do in fact reciprocate invitations, provide higher gratuities when mints are given to us, buy more when samples are provided...

Always give first.

People who receive something from you, are more likely to say 'yes' to your requests.



## 2. Liking

If people think that you like them, there is a better chance that they will listen. Find similarities to highlight.

We tend to relate to people who share characteristics, whether the same hometown, schools, occupation, taste in food, art...

Make a point of liking them first – and there is always something to like...

Provide genuine compliments and praise, especially behind someone's back.

Identify areas for cooperation (building on connecting agendas in reciprocity). Volunteer for committees, teams, campaigns, where you have mutual goals.

Before trying to influence someone, identify your similarities and bring them to the surface.

One study showed that negotiations ended up well for both parties more often when they exchanged personal information about each other first.





# TWO FOR MAKING DECISIONS IN TIMES OF UNCERTAINTY

## 3. Authority

Demonstrate your expertise, confidence, and trustworthiness.

The Board has credibility as community representatives; the CEO has credibility as a subject matter expert. Recognize the difference. And use it.

Accepting authority can be a shortcut to decision-making for funders and policy-makers. Credible experts and unbiased sources of information help decision-makers decide what they should do. People trust what experts say about a matter – but be aware that staff (including the CEO) can appear self-serving if jobs are on the line or self-interest in general.



And they use shortcuts to assessing your authority – including your clothes/appearance, your titles and credentials, your accomplishments and history. Professionals who display their credentials tend to be more trusted than those who do not.

Engage others with authority to speak on your behalf. And use expert testimonials as soon as possible as everything else you say later will carry their authority.

If you find more than one expert supporting your idea, you multiply their persuasive impact.

I was once involved on a campaign where the police chief spoke eloquently on the importance of literacy for crime reduction. That testimony carried more authority than the literacy experts.

If there are experts/authority figures that support our message, we should include them in our communication as testimonials.

Be sure to build networks, partnerships, coalitions with others with similar mission and priorities. Do it early and work to maintain them.

Perhaps oddly, authority and expertise are enhanced when admitting first what you do not know...



## 4. Social Proof or Consensus

People follow the “many others” in their peer group. We tend to conform. This is a very common form of voluntary social compliance – and often called consensus.

When people are uncertain, they look to their peers for answers. What are others in your target’s group doing?

We respond to this horizontal pressure more than vertical pressure. We tend to seek consensus with peers. Testimonials from others in the target’s group can be helpful.

We can unleash this power by showing the responses of “similar others,” others’ past successes, as well as these testimonials of similar others.

Try to demonstrate what the peer group is doing in a time of uncertainty when it supports your agenda or case.

Recognize the importance of opinion leaders, especially when dealing with political parties that enforce a consensus on members.

There are so many studies of success here, from greater choice of restaurant menu items marked “most popular” to reusing towels in a hotel when informed that others who had occupied the room reused them. Indeed, many professional staff attend conferences to learn what their peers are doing, to emulate, replicate programs and services of these “similar others”.



# TWO FOR MOVING THEM TO ACTION

## 5. Consistency

We want to be consistent with our values and beliefs and our prior commitments and stated positions.

Connect with the values and beliefs of your target whenever possible – this could be a donor, philanthropy, politician, funder, policy-maker.

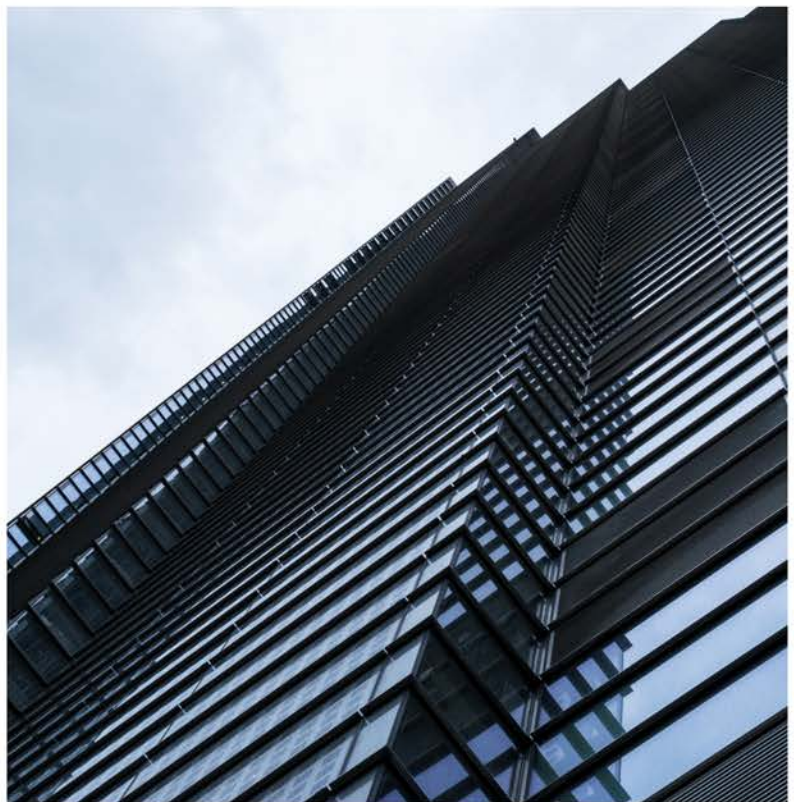
What are their values and beliefs? Do not get sidetracked by ideology as many issues are supported in different forms by different ideologies.

Encourage public declarations of support.

If you can get them to take a small voluntary step in your direction, they will want to be consistent with that in the future. Try and get it in writing.

People want to be consistent with what they've already said or done in front of you. Get them to say it in public for accountability.

Start small and build on their existing commitments, from their public positions.





## 6. Scarcity

The less there is, the more we want it.

But what constitutes scarcity in the not-for-profit sector?

Honesty is critical here (some may have cried “wolf” too many times already).

Benefits are not enough. What is unique about your service? What would be lost?

And, again, only say it if it is really true.

You know all about this – you get the limited-time offers or the limited number of items or seats available – and we respond.

Now one issue arises in our sector...

there is a problem with “free” services, which some of us tout.

How can they be scarce if they are free? If they were that scarce we would surely charge.

But are they really free? or more accurately barrier-free? or without charge? or taxpayer- or member-funded?

Also, be careful with your framing. Which sandbox are you playing in?

Public libraries, for example, are pivoting from the information sandbox (many, many competitors) to the community learning centre sandbox where there is greater potential to be “barrier-free” (no charge), unique and critical infrastructure.





# AND ONE MORE? OR A COUPLE?

## Pre-suasion

Pre-suasion is about putting people in a certain state of mind that advances your case, even before you make any request. You have done your banking, making your deposits.

Obviously, the six principles apply.

## Unity (Shared-Identity - Togetherness)

The idea that people share some identity with you can be extremely powerful. If we communicate this shared identity, they consider us one of them.

Why do you think that peers call peers for donation?

The increased tribalism in today's society makes this principle even more powerful.



**Little changes that leverage these principles can have enormous effect.**

Remember that contrast is always available...  
Ask yourself and your prospect: compared to what?

**The ethical use of influence means being honest and maintaining integrity.**

## TWO MORE SUGGESTIONS...

### Remember the Impact of Generosity

When interacting with people for the first time, always expect the best from them. This allows you to be generous with them.

Generosity acts on three different persuasion principles:

- Liking. People like you more when you're generous.
- Reciprocity. When you're generous to others, people want to give back to you.
- Consistency. Once they make a commitment to see you as a partner, they act consistently with that.

### Ask for Advice, Not Opinions

When you have a new idea that you'd like to get buy-in from a group,  
**If you ask someone for an opinion, you get a critic.**

They take a step back to see where they stand relative to your idea.

**If instead, you ask for "advice", they take a step towards you.**

In their mind, they become your partner.

And actually, the same is true when asking for feedback – ask for advice instead...



## NOW YOU NEED A PLAN!

There are many examples available. Contact us if you need them.

We have seen success in small and large organizations, local, provincial/state, and national organizations, based on relationships and the principles of advocacy, influence, and leadership outlined here.

One common example:

- Set your overarching goal.
- Establish some specific objectives.
- Identify your targets.
- **Then “suit up and spread out”.**



In other words...

Assign specific responsibilities to each Board member. Assign elected politicians, or key decision-makers, or political staff, or critical funders or... Suggest that each Board member choose one or two, perhaps someone they know, or have a connection, or have some similarities... And then assign the rest.

Provide some training and coaching if necessary or there is reluctance or nervousness. This can be professional coaching or peer-to-peer.

Have some talking points. Not the ask. This is about making the deposits. What are you doing that aligns with the target's agenda or priorities or values/beliefs?

Set a low bar. Just coffee to talk about the impact you are having in and on your community, for example.

Check back in each month at a board discussion. How did it go? What was the response? What did you learn? How can we monitor and adjust?

And keep at it.

You are developing a relationship here. Remember the two main principles – reciprocity and liking.

You are connecting agendas. You are explaining how their investment in you is making a difference.

You are identifying similarities, and providing genuine and positive feedback.

You are laying the groundwork.



***This is governance as leadership:***

because you are responsible for ensuring sustainable resources. Because you believe in your mission.

***This is advocacy:***

a planned, deliberate, sustained effort to develop understanding and support incrementally over time.

***This is leadership:***

a process of social influence through which one person is able to enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task.

***This is applying the seven universal principles of influence and persuasion:***

1. Reciprocity.
2. Liking.
3. Authority.
4. Social Proof or Consensus.
5. Commitment and Consistency.
6. Scarcity.
7. Unity.

## THEN A FEW CONCLUSIONS...

There is no one right answer...  
each situation is unique...

but there is a critical new issue for boards  
to move influence and revenue development,  
based on evidence, up the priority list...

We need board members and organizational  
leaders who understand and exercise social  
influence...

We know what works, and it isn't typically  
what we have always done.

Be an advocate. Learn from the research.  
Be a leader. Exercise social influence.  
Engage in persuasion. Use the research-  
based principles.

**Remember:**  
***the relationship is the message.***

You need a relationship to be heard and  
understood.

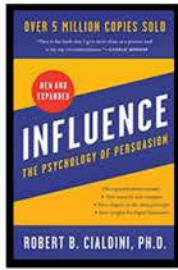
Yes, there is a lot here...

But isn't your mission worth it?

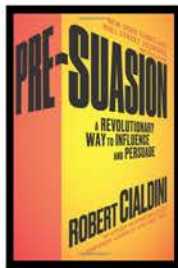




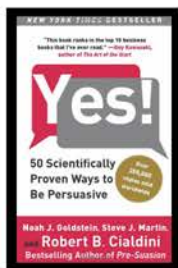
## A FEW BOOKS TO CONSIDER:



Robert Cialdini's seminal work, **Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion**, new and expanded in 2021. Dr. Cialdini explains the psychology of why people say yes and how to apply these insights ethically in everyday settings. Using memorable stories and relatable examples, he makes this important subject surprisingly easy.



In **Pre-Suasion: A Revolutionary Way to Influence and Persuade**, Cialdini explains how it's not necessarily the message itself that changes minds, but the key moment before you deliver that message. What separates effective communicators from truly successful persuaders? Cialdini explains how to prepare people to be receptive to a message before they experience it. Optimal persuasion is achieved only through optimal pre-suasion. In other words, to change "minds" a pre-suader must also change "states of mind."



I also like an earlier work by Goldstein, Martin and Cialdini, **Yes! 50 Scientifically Proven Ways to be Persuasive**. Very simple but remarkably effective strategies that will make you much more persuasive at work and in your personal life. Often counterintuitive, the findings presented in Yes! will steer you away from common pitfalls while empowering you with little known but proven wisdom. Making small, scientifically proven changes to your approach can have a dramatic effect on your persuasive powers.





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Feel free to contact me with your questions, concerns, issues... or for a second opinion...

*Ken*



Ken Haycock for  
Better Boards. Better Communities.  
2022

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