

# 5

SEBASTIAN ORZECOWSKI

## ***Social influence methods and their usage in business***

Opiekun naukowy pracy: prof. dr hab. Witold Kieżun

**Sebastian Orzechowski** jest absolwentem Wyższej Szkoły Przedsiębiorczości i Zarządzania im. Leona Koźmińskiego. Dodatkowo ukończył trzyletni program zarządzania zasobami ludzkimi ze specjalizacją „Przywództwo i zespoły zadaniowe” w Szkole Wyższej Psychologii Społecznej w Warszawie. Obecnie realizuje Program MBA „Change and Technology” w Institut d’Administration des Entreprises, Université Paul Cézanne Aix-Marseille III we Francji.

Do tej pory zdobywał doświadczenia zawodowe m.in. w Ministerstwie Finansów w departamencie finansów narodowych, Banku Gospodarki Żywnościowej w departamencie międzynarodowym, firmie Megabajt Sp. z o.o. jako product manager, oraz ostatnio jako project manager w firmie Genesis S.A. w Aix-En-Provence we Francji.

W trakcie studiów w WSPiZ Sebastian Orzechowski był koordynatorem „Buddy Program” (opieka nad studentami z zagranicy, przyjeżdżającymi na studia do Polski), członkiem samorządu studenckiego oraz członkiem studenckiego koła naukowego „Tygryski” działającego przy centrum badawczym „TIGER”.

Ukończył liczne warsztaty, m.in. półroczny kurs „Małej Przedsiębiorczości”, „Metody Podejmowania Decyzji Kierowniczych” oraz „High Performance Business Consulting in Banking Sector” organizowane przez firmę consultingową Accenture.

Wielokrotny stypendysta za osiągnięcia naukowe, m.in. ministra edukacji narodowej i sportu, Fundacji Edukacyjnej Przedsiębiorczości oraz WSPiZ.

Sebastian Orzechowski uzyskał drugie miejsce w ogólnopolskim konkursie „Marketplace” za prowadzenie wirtualnego biznesu oraz nagrodę IV stopnia w ogólnopolskiej olimpiadzie „Przedsiębiorczość, Finanse i Zarządzanie” organizowanej przez Fundację Edukacyjną Przedsiębiorczości.

Kontakt: [sebastian.orzechowski@gmail.com](mailto:sebastian.orzechowski@gmail.com), [seba158@wp.pl](mailto:seba158@wp.pl)

## Introduction

In every step of private and business life, people use and undergo the techniques of social influence. If we want to run a business, manage our teams or just converse in more effective way, we should know and make use of those methods. Of course we have to remember that every man and every situation is different, therefore there is no one, best method, that will lead us to success in every case. However, we can understand and learn how to use techniques, which influence human behavior. After gaining this knowledge we will be more efficient and effective in accomplishing our private and business goals, and, what is even more important, we will know when somebody is using social influence techniques against us.

When we talk about social influence, we often presume it means something bad such as pressures and manipulations from other people or Don Vito's most famous line, „I'm going to make him an offer he can't refuse”. We may relate this term with following the crowd like mindless sheep, or falling victim to a con-artist, while believing that we should try to be independent thinkers, assessing each new situation for ourselves.

Of course, thinking for ourselves – independently and critically assessing new information and situations that we encounter – can often keep us from being tricked by unscrupulous people.

We can use these same critical thinking abilities to assess whether social influence is always a bad thing. We will take a scientific look at social influence, assuming from the start that it is a normal form of human behavior, is not mindless, and can lead to both good and bad outcomes.

## Definition of social influence

When we change what we believe, or how we behave, after observing the attitudes or actions of others, we are making this change because of social influence. It is a process of changing our attitudes, values and behaviors in

response to the attitudes and behaviors of the others. The change may come in response to the attitudes or actions of many people (like a group of peers) or only one person (an authority). Because change can occur in many different ways, sometimes it can lead us to be anti-social and sometimes it can lead us to be pro-social, sometimes can lead us to take more risks, but at other times will lead us to be more cautious.

## **Basic rules of the social influence techniques**

There are six most important rules, which decide about the effectiveness of social influence and explain why people want to fulfill other people's requests. Robert Cialdini, the authority in a field of social influence techniques, says that in spite of existence of many social influence techniques, most of them can be classified into six basic rules: reciprocity, commitment and consistency, social proof, sympathy, authority and inaccessibility. Let's analyze those rules and check how can we use them in business.

### **Reciprocation**

Reciprocation principle tells people to give something in return for what they are given, material or non-material goods, e.g. a favor. How often does it happen that when somebody smiles to us, we send them a smile back? This rule is a basic element of human solidarity. From a social perspective, this rule is so important that most people feel the duty to follow it, since those who don't, bring upon themselves social rejection. For example this rule is used by the members of Hare Krishna, who come up to people on the street and give them a small gift e.g. flower. Most people are surprised and take the gift. Few steps further along they are stopped by another member of Hare Krishna, who asks them for a donation. At that time people who took the gift feel an internal obligation to fulfill this request. In business life we meet with this principle every day e.g. a colleague from our office brings us a cup of coffee in the morning and afterwards (in a few minutes or even in a few hours) he asks us for help in a project; R&D director makes a decision that helps HR director realize his policy and afterwards asks him to support his idea of implementing new R&D policy in the company; one of negotiation teams seeing that the other team decrease or resigns from one of their requirements, will now be more inclined to decrease or resign from their demands. All of those actions build the internal solidarity of the teams, departments or the whole corporation and, what I most important, they create strong fundamentals of effective work.

## **Commitment and consistency**

People's expectation of acting in a consistent way with their behavior, words and beliefs together with their engagement in that activity is a very strong motivator to work. The commitment and consistency principle states that if we will engage people in an action or entrust them accomplishing a goal, then they will continue to perform this activity even when the circumstances of these actions will become less beneficial. Being consequent and coherent is a quality highly respected in many societies. Additionally acting in a some, consistent way is a handy shortcut when one has to deal with unexpected situations. This behavior doesn't require analyzing and considering new information. If a new situation occurs one will often prefer to act in a consistent, tested way. For example we can bring up a case from Iowa state, in which the gas saving program was put into practice. Only a fraction of citizens were informed that the names of people taking part in this program would be publicized in a local newspaper. Those who knew about it, have saved more gas than those who did not know about the publication. But even after the first group received the letter in which they were informed that their names will not be publicized, still they saved more gas than the others. As we can see consistency became a strong factor in people's behavior even when the circumstances of this actions turn out to be less beneficial. Furthermore when the conditions change or even disappear, people's behavior remains. In my opinion methods based on this principle, containing hidden and misleading information, prevent building positive interpersonal relationships, but on the other hand they are really efficient.

## **Social proof**

The principle of social proof says that people act or make an opinion in a way that is coherent with the behavior or opinion of the group (in which they are currently situated). What is more important, those opinions do not need to be coherent with the person's real beliefs. There are two main reasons why people act in this way. First – when somebody observes behavior of other people, s/he treats it as a source of information and based on it s/he creates the opinion about the current situation. Therefore the first reason has an informational nature. Second – one does not want to proclaim an opinion, which is different to the opinion of the group. This happens because people care about being a part of a group and they are afraid of disapproval or even

banishment from a group. Second reason has therefore a normative and a conformist nature. We can observe that kind of behavior every day in politics when a deputies, senators or ministers say what their electorate wants to hear; or on a stock exchange when investors sell or buy stocks according to the behavior of other investors e.g. when they see that the price of the stocks falls they sell their shares not because they checked the actual condition of the company but just because somebody else is doing so. They think that when somebody else is doing it then s/he has information and probably is right. Additionally, the sheep run principle works here – if somebody does it then I should too. Furthermore the number of people who have the same opinion strengthens this effect. We can call it an avalanche effect because, as the group increases in number, the strength of converting new members also grows. There is a rub of social proof principle.

## **Sympathy**

The natural thing is that people are more likely to fulfill the requests or orders of the people that they like and respect rather than those of people they do not like. It is easier for the people who are more physically attractive because they are considered as nice, popular and therefore people are more likely to listen to them and be their companions. The other rule is that we prefer people that are similar to ourselves e.g. tall people will like more tall people, brunettes will prefer brunettes etc. Furthermore, people react even to small but important similarities like shared opinions, hobbies, gestures and mannerisms, speed of talking etc. In a business life we can use this principle by hiring people that are physical attractive as our sales representatives, hostess or use them in an advertisements to promote our products.

## **Authority**

It goes without saying that the opinion of the people that are authorities for us will often be considered by us as true and proper. Additionally, we will be more likely to fulfill their orders or requests and what is even more important we will be doing it without any reflection. However, how can we raise a feeling of our authority in a people that do not know us well? We can do it by creating an image of the guide, manager, person in charge. We have to keep in mind that people often build their opinion upon external factors, from which the most obvious is outfit and the appearance. When people see the person

dressed in elegant, chic suit they tend to treat him as an expert in some field. Then people use a mental shortcut because they think that if this person is an expert in some field than in this unclear situation in which they are now his opinion has to be logical and credible. I recommend wearing at least an ironed shirt every time when we have to settle our private or business issues. Additionally, if we wear a jacket or a business suit then at the whole beginning we have already 60% of success. Another factor which tells people about our status can be for example an expensive car, a large office desk, named parking lot, our diplomas in the office etc. Additionally, when people see with who and how many people we are in a close relations then they think about us that we are the popular and interesting person. In a business and private life we have to be careful about unreasonable and indiscriminate trust to the opinion of people we consider being authorities. That kind of boundless trust to authorities is called a „captainoza” effect. It was discovered during the studies on the rookie pilots behavior during their training. In those trainings the crew did not dare to correct the obvious mistake of the captain, or even ask if he is certain of his decisions. In every fourth crew nobody react or corrected the obvious mistake of the captain. Furthermore we have to remember that it is very delusory and unjustifiable to reject and ignore the opinion of the people without authority i.e. the bottom structure employees are the one that meets the clients, take part in a manufacturing process etc. They have knowledge about the client’s needs, their compliments, or they have ideas how to improve the manufacturing process. We always have to listen to their opinions and never disregard them because very often those are the most accurate ideas and solutions. As we can see, there is no doubt that using or creating the authority is a very strong method of social influence.

## **Inaccessibility**

The principle of the inaccessibility says that the material and nonmaterial goods, which are limited or almost unreachable are treated as unique, precious and are most desired. We could see it in Poland during the communism when people used food cards e.g. even when somebody did not use the sugar he realized those food cards just because the sugar was almost inaccessible. The same happens with the luxury goods. Why almost everybody would prefer to own Ferrari rather than Fiat Punto? The main reason is that for the most people this car is unattainable. However, how can we use the inaccessibility principle in business life? For example, decision makers can set up a special reward for the best person or a team in the department in accomplis-

hing short term goals. In the same time it can help in creating the positive competition between the employees or teams. The managers can also offer more raises, job responsibilities, job promotions etc. On the other hand we have to keep in mind that taking away the freedom of work or even the menace of loosing it upset the emotional tension called reactance. This feeling is as stronger as the unexpectedness, importance and number of the taken away goods. The consequence of the reactance is increasing attractiveness of taken or threaten to be taken goods as well as the urge of regaining them. Because of that the fear of degradation, the lost of responsibilities or even the lost of job is a very important motivating factor for the employees.

## **Sequence techniques**

Knowing the aforementioned principles we have to see how they are used by the most important social influence methods. We use the sequence techniques in a specific way. Before asking for the main favor we have to ask for another favor. Depend on the answer to the first request we will know which technique should we use for making the person more likely to fulfill our main request. Below you will find the description and the way of using the most important sequence techniques which are: „Foot in the door”, „Door in the face”, „Karate” and the „Low – ball”.

### **„Foot in the door” technique**

As we said before the „Foot in the door” belong to the sequence techniques in which before asking for the main favor we have to formulate another request. In this case first we have to ask for the less burdensome favor, and after that, ask for the main, harder-to-fulfill favor. If the person rejects our first request, then the chances of fulfilling the main favor grow. Furthermore, the „Foot in the door” technique will work even when the person does not want to fulfill our easier request but he will try to do it or he will declare that he want to help us in fulfilling it. It happens because the auto perception mechanism turns on. This technique works because the person starts to consider the reasons why s/he fulfills the first favor. If the external factors will not be the reason, then the person will start to think, that s/he fulfilled those request because it is in his/her character, personality or opinions etc. The second request drives the person to act in a way which is congruent with the way he thinks about himself, and that’s why he fulfills the second, main request.

Another explanation of this technique is that the harder request, asked after the easier one, becomes subjectively easier to realize. The „Foot in the door” technique is especially effective when it is used on a people who like to be consequent in their behavior. In a psychological point of view the „I” structure of these people is clear, coherent and stable. This technique is most effective when the requests have similar characteristics and deal with the same case. In addition, if the first request will be unusual then the chances of fulfilling the second one grow. What is also important, this technique works even when the requests are asked by two different persons, and the time between first and second request is extended even to few weeks. Asking one request directly after another can even decrease the effect of the „Foot in the door” technique because the person who asked for a favor does not have the time for auto reflection and for thinking about the motivation of fulfilling the first request. So as we can see the very short period between requests can ruin this social influence method. On the other hand, waiting too long between two requests is also incorrect because during this time many things can happen to the person which could change his mind about the motivation of fulfilling first request. In addition we also have to bear in mind that the first request can neither be too simple nor too hard to fulfill. In the first case a person will not think about his motivation and therefore there will be no reason for auto reflection. In the second case a person can feel exploited because he would think that if he had already fulfilled one difficult request, why he should fulfill another one.

## **„Door in the face” technique**

The „Door in the face” technique is based on a contrary principle to „Foot in the door”. It assumes that if we want a person to fulfill our main request, first we have to ask him for a much more difficult favor. The person will probably decline to fulfill the first, almost unrealizable request, so when we will ask him for a second, main, doable favor he will be more willing to do it. There are two principles used in this technique – the mutuality principle and the awakening the sense of guilt mechanism. In the first one, the person who declines the first favor, sees that we are reducing our expectations by asking for the second, easier request, will feel more obligated to make a concession and fulfill the second request. In this technique the main, sometimes difficult request preceded by even harder one, becomes relatively easier to fulfill. In the second case, when a person decline to fulfill our first request, than the sense of guilt emerges and the only way to reduce this sense is to accept to



realize the second (our main) request. There are two main requirements that make the „Door in the face” technique work. Contrary to the „Foot in the door” method, here the request should be asked by the same person and the second request should be formulated directly after the first one was rejected. If the time between the two favors is too long then in the person’s mind those two requests became disconnected and he will not treat fulfilling the second request as a mutual concession. The same mechanism concerns the persons asking for a favor. If the requests will be asked by two different people then the person will also not see the mutual concession, therefore there will be no motivation to fulfill the second, main request. In the business life this technique is used very often by real-estate agents. When they want to sell the house „C” for the good price first they will show to the potential buyer houses „A” and „B” which are in worst shape and furthermore are more expensive than house „C”. Many of the real-estate agents work in this way. We can use this technique during negotiations as well. If we are aware of the interests of both sides then we can ask for a compromise in the field of their main interests. It is evident that e they will reject this request. Then we can form our main request, which is the most important for us. Of course we have to remember that only factual things are negotiable. If we will stick to the facts and carry out the negotiations in a proper and professional manner, the „Door in the face” technique will help us succeed in achieving our main objectives.

## **„Karate” technique**

The „Karate” technique combines the usage of the „Foot in the door” and the „Door in the face” technique. It is also the sequence technique which assumes, that before asking for the main favor we have to ask for another favor. The „Karate” technique says that depending on the answer to the first request we will know which technique (Foot in the door” or „Door in the face”) should be used for making the person more likely to fulfill our main request. Therefore if the person declines to fulfill our first request then the second one should be formed directly after the first one by the same person. In the second case if the person will fulfill our first request then the second, main one should be formulated after some time, by the same or a different person. Regardless of the effect of the first request the chances of fulfilling the main request grow.

## **„Low-Ball” technique**

The „Low-Ball” technique rests on giving somebody a proposition, which at the first glance seems very attractive. Afterward we try to involve the person in this action in order to have him acquainted with and subsequently to form an emotional attachment to this action or a product. Consequently, when the person will engage himself in this action, spend his time for knowing the process or product then we give him information which will change the situation to become less attractive and beneficial than it was seen at the beginning. Despite that the person does not withdraw or resign, he will still continue this task or just buy the product. This is due to the „commitment and consistency” mechanism. If the person acts in a conditions of free will and thinks that s/he is engaging himself in accomplishing this goal, hence even after changing the conditions the person feels obligated to continuing and accomplishing this action. The person acts in this way because he does not want to waste his already invested time and work. One very important element of this technique is to treat the person politely and with respect, because it is harder to break relationship with a person who treats him/her in this way. If there will be no positive, interpersonal connection between the two people the „Low-Ball” technique will not work, because the person who was asked to fulfill the favor will feel cheated. In the business life this method is used by many salesmen for example car salesmen who offers some models at a very attractive condition. When the potential client becomes interested in this offer then the salesman offers him the test drive. During the test drive the potential buyer is introduced to the warranty conditions, insurance, favorable hire purchase etc. After some days the person makes his decision of purchasing the car. However when he comes back to the car showroom then the complication starts. For example the promotion for those models had just expired. So the factors that persuaded the person to buy this product were removed. However the person knows that he likes the car, he knows the technical specification and he enjoys driving this model. He had already thought about the purchase and most importantly he spent a lot of time on considering his decision. It is highly probable that he will decide to buy this model at the end. Another example, a person sees a jacket in the shop window which s/he likes very much. Next to this product is the discount label stating that this product comes now with a 30% discount. However when the person enters the shop the shopkeeper tells him that there is no jacket with the right size for him. Disappointed customer on his way out is suddenly is being informed that there is a similar jacket in the new collection but without the discount. This

happens very often that the customer will buy the product. Some banks are also using this technique. They offer very attractive terms for loans or other beneficial terms of cooperation. However, in the contracts, in small prints there are included some hidden costs, terms and conditions. Often the clients do not have knowledge about them while they are signing the contract. This technique does not build the positive interpersonal relations and the company image because it is always based on understatements and hidden information. This technique is always used by companies which use the „hit and run” strategy in which the people just want to sell bad products or services and after that close the company before the clients will notice that they were cheated.

## **Techniques based on egocentrism**

Human nature makes all of us desire to see ourselves in a good light as well as to be perceived positively by others. High self-esteem allows us to feel a part of our environment or group, to which we belong. We try to create our image so that people would treat and think about us in the way we want them to. The techniques outlined below will show how to use this knowledge to effectively influence one’s behaviors.

### **Use first names**

For every person their own first name has a special meaning. When we hear our name in a crowd, we suddenly become interested in who, what and if someone is speaking about us. In interpersonal relationships saying the first name of the person we are approaching, makes the person think that s/he is someone important to us and s/he made a good impression on us. We satisfy the person’s self-esteem and their need to feel special. A person feels appreciated and favored when during a meeting someone remember their name. Persons whose names we use in interpersonal relationships quickly become sympathetic towards us and are thus more likely to comply with our requests. The reason why using one’s first name works is the subjective increase in their interpersonal attractiveness. In business and private life we should pay careful attention to remembering the first names of people we contact (especially face to face contact). It increases our chances of effective interpersonal communication and business interactions. Additionally, outsiders who see us using first names of many people, will want to be noticed by us, and to belong

to the same group. The more the people who want to belong to our group, the better our social attractiveness and status. This technique is used by car dealers, insurance agents, some negotiators and all of those whose work requires forming interpersonal relationships with clients and suppliers.

## **Find common ground**

In general, people like their own characteristics therefore when they notice that someone else has the same characteristics they tend to treat them more favorably. They are more likely to comply with our requests and orders. Quick probing of common features and communicating those similarities to the other party makes conversations friendlier and more informal. Such a sociable atmosphere fosters business relationships. This effect is strengthened in some special cases, for example when parties share a date of birth or first name. Such information causes us to treat the other person as belonging to the same social group as us. This type of similarities can double the chance of our request being met. It is also worthwhile to look for shared interests, family situation, past, etc. This method is often used by traveling salespeople, politicians and all who have a direct contact with clients.

## **Show hypocrisy**

This technique requires two steps. First step requires convincing the other person to declare or support an idea they accept. The second entails proving to the person that he is behaving in a way inconsistent with his own declarations. When a person notices this hypocrisy they experience dissonance, a discrepancy of stimuli s/he receives. To remove the dissonance, the person must either change his/her opinion (which is very difficult for people who have a high need for consequential behavior) or start to behave in the way consistent with their declarations. Otherwise their own sense of morality and internal stability is threatened. This technique is often used in advertisements, especially social, for example ads concerning reducing driving speed, drink driving prevention, etc. First a commonly accepted situation is presented, for example take care when approaching a pedestrian crossing or don't drink and drive. Almost every person will agree with such statements. Then a question is asked: „How many times did you drive too fast on a pedestrian crossing?” or „How many times did you drink and drive?”. Persons who have performed the behavior should feel dissonance since they know they behaved against their

own convictions. The only way to change this feeling is to change the behavior so that they fit our beliefs.

## Use of witnesses

As mentioned before, most of human actions are auto-representative. This is the reason why, during a conversation, people behave differently if there are witnesses present. This mechanism is exaggerated when the witness is close with one of the parties or one of the parties cares about the witness. For example men in North America and Western Europe are more likely to comply with charitable requests when a witness to a conversation is a woman. Men want to impress women with their kindness, social and financial status. Another example is a request directed at a Japanese man in the presence of his superior. Japanese culture and paternalism, which are evident in private and business life, cause an employee to want to be seen in the best possible light in front of their employer. He will thus be more likely to comply with our request. We should always remember about intercultural differences, which can reduce the effectiveness of this method when used in different parts of the world and in different social groups.

## Hesitation overcoming techniques

All the techniques of social influence cause hesitations among the people who are told to perform certain activities. Methods presented hereafter are supposed to overcome those feelings of uncertainty and convince our interlocutors to approval.

### **„But wait, there is more”**

This method is based on the initial proposition, which is interesting enough to gain potential client's attention. When the offer is introduced primarily, appears the feeling of hesitation. At the very moment we add another benefit, either material (e.g. new product) or non-material (e.g. free product shipment), which increases the attractiveness of our offer, thus encouraging the client to the approval. The effectiveness of this method is far bigger than in the standard bargain, because it is dynamic. A person who finds out about those bonuses, is usually more willing to seize the opportunity. Additional profit appears unexpectedly, in order to lead the customer into the

state of carelessness, which diminishes the process of transforming the information, thus concluding in automatic reaction. This technique is far more effective for cheap products, because more expensive shopping involves analyzing all the details of the offer, which certainly denies carelessness. We can observe this method in the so-called „TV-shops”. For example, we are offered a special belt, which „amazingly” makes us thinner, without any workout – all we have to do is wear it every day for 20 minutes. The price of this „wonderful” device is astonishingly low – only 199 dollars. While analyzing this „amazing” product, with a „reasonably” affordable price, the customer wonders whether it is really needed or not. Right then appears the most miraculous sentence of American TV-shops – „but wait, there is more”, after which the audience is overwhelmed by the large number of bonuses – starting with a spare belt, through the gels quickening the process of reducing weight, finishing with a DVD with sets of abdominal muscles exercises. The customer stunned by the free products, often carelessly decides to purchase the device. Actually, if we thought over the presented bundle of products, we could easily notice that in addition to the „amazing” belt supposed to grant us the fitness without any effort, we acquire a DVD with a set of abdominal muscles exercises, which does not appear to be very logical. If we do not want to go under the social influence methods we always have to remember to analyze the presented offers.

## **„Play it well”**

A person who is asked to fulfill a certain request always encounters an internal conflict between the willing to help and avoiding it, due to the fact that it is time-consuming and involves some effort. The aim of „play it well” technique is to decrease the resistance and to increase the encouragement to perform the action, first by breaking the routine and making the communication more surprising, and then by presenting new arguments convincing the person to fulfill the main request. This technique can be used in selling products, when we break the routine by presenting the price in cents, then convert it into dollars and add another argument. For example: „Maybe you would like to buy a new drink? It costs 200 cents (2 seconds of pause), I mean 2 dollars. It’s really tasty”. This technique works even when people do not have physical contact, e.g. during the phone call: „Would you please give me 240 seconds? (2 seconds of pause) I mean 4 minutes. It’s really not so long”. That kind of routine breaking is immensely effective and always gets people’s attention.

## Physical contact

Another method overcoming the hesitations is a simple physical contact. Different cultures and people have diversified personal spaces. It is generally acceptable to shake a hand with a stranger, but standing too close to another person can cause a feeling of embarrassment. Gender is also a factor which influences the preferences of personal space. For example men generally prefer to be touched by women than other men, while women do not seem to feel any difference. It is also important, that direct contact (face to face) is a lot more effective in convincing a person to fulfill a request than talking via phone or mail. Direct contact makes it harder to refuse when someone asks for help. Person who refuses risks receiving verbal or non-verbal signs of sadness or disappointment. Eye-contact also plays an important role, because it shows some sort of transparency in our request, our good faith and actual seriousness of the situation. In business and personal relations we have to remember that in order to increase our chances of getting our request fulfilled, it is advisable to contact personally, avoiding telephones and email. On the other hand, when we know that a certain person wants us to do something that is in conflict with our beliefs and we will have to refuse the request, we should insist on indirect contact.

However, the best effect of physical contact is a simple touch of another person. It turns out that person who is gently touched is more willing to help us. Furthermore, the employee, who has been pat on the shoulder, right after receiving commands, works harder. This is caused by the fact that touch makes us feel an interpersonal link with our interlocutor. Person who has been touched by us tends to think about us as nice and open, and through that is more willing to help. Another explanation could be the fact that when someone holds the other person by the hand, he is recognized as someone who is entitled to give orders or requests. Right then activates the system of social entitlements. What is more, tapping someone on the shoulder or touching his forearm can be treated as breaking the routine and making the whole situation more special. From the psychological point of view, touching a stranger causes physiological excitement, by which the person analyzes the situation more reflective, which leads to the behavior compatible with his system of values. This thesis was proven in the experiment which I carried out while working in the café in one of Warsaw high schools. While giving the change, I gently touched the fingers of some clients. Secondly I asked them to throw the empty bottle left on the table into the bin. Just as I thought, people who have been touched by me were more willing to fulfill my request.

Furthermore, they were coming back more often, were more polite, and while buying some products sometimes started a chat.

Another aspect of interpersonal contact, improving the effectiveness of social influence is the people's mood. Positive atmosphere between people increases the readiness to fulfilling the requests. To change the person's mood we can use a simple smile. People who see someone smiling tend to smile-back, and this mimic expression influences our mood. Why does the positive mood increase the willingness to help? Mainly because when we are happy, we are more prone to intuitive thinking, using the „mental shortcuts”, while people who are in bad emotional state tend to analyze and act more rationally.

## Emotional swing

The next technique of social influence is leading a person into a so-called „emotional swing”. We can achieve that by rapid and unexpected withdrawing an element of fear. Submission does not result from the fact of experiencing the fear or a feeling of relief after it vanished, but from the sequence between them. Person who experiences the emotional swing is put into a moment of mental „standstill”, caused by sudden emotions. This state forces the person to take actions automatically and carelessly, which is conducive to submission. It is so because emotional swing induces retrospective analysis of what has just happened or could have happened. Right then the person lacks the means of effective coping with the actual situation. It is interesting that while facing the emotional swing people very rarely ask for the reasons even of the weirdest requests, e.g. to put the telephone from one ear to another. We have to remember that the state of emotional swing lasts very short, so to use it effectively the main request has to be presented right after the rapid withdrawing the source of emotions.

## Special expressions

Sometimes we don't realize how certain words we say can play an important role in communication and can be used to strengthen social influence. I am going to illustrate techniques, in which certain expressions play a vital part.

### „Please”

We all know that courtesy in interpersonal relations can help us achieve our goals. Not always though a kind word „please” increases our chance of



success. In fact, quite the opposite, it can lower the chance of our request being met. This is due to two different reasons. First of all the using the word „please” in case of petty requests can arouse suspicion and be taken as an element of persuasion tactic. Secondly, the word can change the subject to which the help is due, e.g. „Would you buy those cookies? The money will be given to the starving children in Africa. Please.” It can be perceived not as a way of helping the children, but helping the person who is asking. It is advisable to remember that the request works best in the relations between people of the same gender, while among different genders commands and orders are more effective.

## **„Every penny counts”**

An interesting technique is an open request, one that does not specify how big a contribution we are asking for. In that situation we should add that every kind of help is very precious and will be taken with gratitude. A request accompanied by „every penny counts” is effective since it is difficult to find and give rational reasons for not helping. Furthermore refusing to help can create negative feelings about oneself. In this technique it is important not to ask directly for a small contribution and also not to set the top boundary. Rarely will a person offer only one penny. In addition we have to remember that this method is best used in direct, interpersonal contact. This technique is widely used by the nonprofit and charity organizations collecting the funds e.g. Polish „Wielka Orkiestra Świątecznej Pomocy”.

## **Asking in an unusual way**

Sometimes, instead of asking in a „typical” way it is worth to formulate our request in an unusual way, e.g. instead of asking for 2 dollars, we should ask for 1,65 dollar. This way the asked person will not act automatically but will think about why we need such a sum. This makes the request unique, which can indicate that it is important for us. The asked person, knowing that meeting this request will not cause him a trouble, will be more likely to fulfill it.

## **Ask about their well-being**

Starting a conversation with a kind question increases the effectiveness of our influence. If we ask people how they are, they are likely to answer „well”. When we hear such an answer, we should express our happiness because of

their well-being. This will increase the person's yield to our requests. This technique is called „foot in the mouth”. This method works because a person in a good mood will try to keep up the good mood of the others. The key is not the positive feeling itself but rather expressing this positive feeling publicly. On the other hand complaining can also be a social influence technique since it portrays the complainant as a person in a difficult life situation. This picture of a victim, needing help or cheering up makes others more willing to comply. This method can be used with charitable requests as well as commercial ones. Asking a person about their well-being encourages the feeling of closeness, shows interest in the other person and thus strengthens the effect of yielding. This technique is often used by insurance agents during prearranged meetings with their clients. In order to create the feeling of relatedness with the client, „how are you?” is the usual way to start a conversation. The moment an answer is given, the agent shows his satisfaction that the client is fine, or sympathy when the client is not so well. A question should make the client feel good and show him that he is important for the agent as a person.

## **The strength of the conversation**

The verbal communication creates the feeling of closeness between the two persons. It happens like this because they have to listen and respond to other's opinion and because of that they learn about each other. During the conversation the feeling of closeness and the person's yield to our requests grows. Asking any polite question e.g. presented before question about well-being is a very good way to start the conversation. If the asked person will get involved in the conversation we have to treat this as a signal which activates mechanisms based on the social influence principles. What is also important, if the person is interested by the information which he received from us during the conversation he will activate his cognitive resources. If the person will not be interested by the subject of conversation then he will process the information automatically without any understanding. Knowing this we have to bear in mind that during the conversation about the issues which are not important to our interlocutor, we do not have to share the same opinion. However, if the issue has a very big importance to the person whom we are talking to, then the similarity of the opinion is crucial and it increases the person's yield to our requests. In a business life the dialog is used in every level of the corporate structure, between the departments, branches, companies etc. The invitation for a dinner or a lunch before a business conversation is common in every business. People want to build before a feeling of

closeness, because they know that it will help in their future business partnership. I have made studies, in which as a bartender/clerk I have talked to some customers during the sales. Those persons were coming back to the shop more often and also were nicer than the people that I have not talked to.

## Conclusions

The methods illustrated in this paper are not all social influence techniques. I have concentrated mostly on the methods in which there is a direct interaction between two persons. As I mention before, everyone and every situation is different, therefore there is no one, best method, that will lead us to success in every case. In each technique there are many factors like social surrounding, cultural differences, gender etc. that play a very important role and can be crucial to the effect of social influence. It is also significant to use those techniques in the right way. As a reminder the best effect of the „Foot in the door” technique can be obtained if we ask the second request few days after the first one; in the „Door in the face” technique the time between two requests should be short; in an „emotional swing” the main request should be formulated directly after withdrawing the source of emotions. Another vital factor which increases the person’s yield to our requests is the ability of combining two or more techniques and use them at the same time with flexibility of switching from one technique to another. If we will see that one technique in a particular situation does not work then we have to stop using it and try to use another one. It is also important to remember that being dishonest and using manipulation in each technique will only bring the single effect, but in a long term the consequences can be irreversible.

The aim of this document is not only to describe these techniques and the way of using them, but also to make the reader aware of how and when s/he can be exposed to the social influence methods. If we do not want to undergo to these techniques we always have to think and analyze the requests and situations in which we are found. We also have to be careful about the routine because it causes the thoughtless acting. Routine does not require processing of the information or analysis of the current situations therefore it minimizes our options of solving the problems. If we will analyze the information then we could consciously react by saying „no” in the moments when somebody is using the social influence methods on us. On the other hand, by knowing above mentioned techniques and analyzing the facts we will never have 100% certainty that we will not undergo the social influence methods.

## **Bibliography:**

- Doliński D., *Techniki wpływu społecznego*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe „Scholar” Sp. z o.o., Warszawa 2005.
- Doliński D., Nawrat R. & Rudak I., *Dialogue involvement as a social influence technique*, „Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin” 2001.
- Doliński D. *On inferring one’s beliefs from one’s attempts and consequences for subsequent compliance*, „Journal of Personality and Social Psychology” 2001.
- Cialdini R. B., *Wywieranie wpływu na ludzi. Teoria i praktyka*, Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne, Gdańsk 1999.
- Cialdini R. B., *Influence: Science and practice (4th ed.)*, Allyn & Bacon, Boston 2001.
- Cialdini R. B., *The science of persuasion*, „Scientific American” 2001, 284, 76-81.
- Forgas J. P., Williams K. D., *Social Influence: Direct and Indirect Influences*, „Psychology Press”, 2001.