



MULTIPLY 417

Passion: The Bridge between People and Purpose

Weekly Tip September 1, 2025

7 Ways to Help Them Say Yes!

Dear Ministry Leader,

I've heard a story about a young boy learning an amazing lesson from his grandfather one Christmas morning. In a moment of playfulness, the grandfather presented the boy with a stick that had a few red feathers attached to it.



The grandfather led the boy outside to a tree near his tool shed, where a family of robins had nested. As they slowly and quietly made their way to just beneath the tree, the grandfather instructed the boy to raise the feathered end of the stick up to the nest.

Nearby, a male red-breasted robin stood guard. When he saw the red feathers, he immediately attacked, chirping wildly and flapping his wings in distress. The boy was dumbfounded.

Between chuckles, the grandfather explained that red feathers made the bird go berserk. I asked why, and he told me he wasn't sure but figured that the bird thought the feathers belonged to another robin. He said robins protect their territory and will attack another robin on sight.

The "magic" of fixed action patterns

Since then, I've seen experiments demonstrating that a male robin will attack a simple bunch of red breast feathers but ignore a detailed replica of an actual male robin that does not have red breast feathers.

This is an example of what scientists call "fixed-action patterns" in animals. A fixed action pattern is a precise and predictable sequence of behavior. It's an instinctive, automatic response that's useful when you need to know how to encourage (or, some would say, convince)

someone to say "yes." This sequence is set in motion by a specific "trigger."

Fixed-action patterns are common among animals. But what about humans? What if you could use a trigger to set off a desirable sequence of behavior in a potential customer, like saying "yes" to a request you make? Concerned you can't write the greatest appeal letter of all time? Actually, you can.

In *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion*, Robert B. Cialdini, a respected social scientist and specialist in compliance psychology, says that "...automatic, stereotyped behavior is prevalent in much of human action..."

He cites an experiment by Harvard social psychologist Ellen Langer, where you can see this concept in action. Langer approached people waiting in line to use a copy machine and asked, "Excuse me, I have five pages. May I use the Xerox machine?" About 60% said "yes."

Under similar circumstances, she did the same thing but added, "because I have to make some copies." In this case, an overwhelming 93% said "yes."

What caused the dramatic increase in positive responses?

It's a well-known principle that people like to have a reason, perhaps to avoid being naive. A reason helps people make a decision and justify their actions. However, in this experiment, "because I have to make some copies" does not provide any new information or a genuine reason.

"Because" is usually followed by information and has become, for most people, a "trigger." Once learned, this trigger is powerful enough to set a behavior sequence in motion, in this case, a "yes" response, even without concrete information.

Now, let's be real. This is my opinion, I think you can understand these principles and NOT venture into manipulation, BUT I also think it is a tightrope walk. Using the realities of psychology and what they mean for human behavior can simply be part of understanding how God made us. But on the dark side, you can quickly see how this can be misused, which would violate our desire to live out Philippians 4:17 in our approach with partners.

What makes the difference? **YOUR HEART.** Fundraising must be bathed in prayer, for us, for the results, and certainly for the partner. Well-sought spiritual discernment is something we must seek with every partner, every appointment, every ask.

Passionately,

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