

Dear Parents and Members of the Parents' Committee,

Firstly, thank you.

This letter has been prepared to accompany a dedicated episode of my *Ethical Persuasion Unlocked* podcast for young adults. During that episode, I invited students who believe they and their school would benefit from a more detailed introduction to the science of ethical persuasion to download and share this letter with their parents or parents' committee, who may then, if they wish, present the opportunity to their school's or university's leadership for consideration.

As part of one of my community projects, I donate a limited amount of my time each year to introduce this important life skill to young adults through presentations delivered in schools, business schools and universities, either in person or online. These introductory presentations are **available to educational institutions complimentary** when delivered via live video call or, where delivered in person, for the reimbursement of reasonable travel and accommodation expenses only.

I am able to make this contribution because I am a **Founding Member and Licensed Trainer of the Cialdini Institute**—the organisation established to preserve and advance the scientific work of **Dr Robert Cialdini** (photo right), widely regarded as the world's leading authority on the science of Persuasion and Social Influence. Having taught this science since 2000, I believe every young adult deserves an introduction to this increasingly valuable soft skill, because its absence inevitably reduces their chances of achieving many of the educational and employment opportunities available to them.



A Skill That Is Growing in Importance

The **World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Report** identified Leadership and Social Influence as the **fourth most important workplace skill** organisations needed to develop in 2023. Only two years later, in the 2025 report, that same skill had **risen to third place**, demonstrating that it is considered to be increasing in importance rather than becoming less relevant.

Another large-scale study by **CashNet**, later published by **Forbes**, analysed more than 17 million job advertisements published on Indeed.com. It found Persuasion to be the third most requested soft skill sought by employers.

Interestingly, Strategic Thinking ranked first, Negotiation second, Persuasion third and Presentation Skills fourth. It is difficult to become an outstanding negotiator or presenter without also understanding the science of persuasion.

Yet despite its importance, very few educational institutions provide students with any formal introduction to this subject before they enter the workforce.

Future of Jobs Report 2025

Core skills in 2025



1. Analytical thinking
2. Resilience, flexibility and agility
3. Leadership and social influence
4. Creative thinking
5. Motivation and self-awareness
6. Technological literacy
7. Empathy and active listening
8. Curiosity and lifelong learning
9. Talent management
10. Service orientation and customer service

Cognitive skills Self-efficacy Working with others Management skills Technology skills Engagement skills

Note: The skills selected by surveyed organizations to be of greatest importance to workers at the time of the survey.
Source: World Economic Forum, (2025). Future of Jobs Report 2025.



Why This Matters

Every child will spend much of their life attempting to persuade other people.

They will

- apply for scholarships, university places, apprenticeships and employment.
- write applications, present ideas,
- participate in interviews, negotiate,
- lead teams, influence colleagues, communicate with clients or stakeholders, and
- build relationships both professionally and personally.

The extent to which they are able to communicate persuasively—both verbally and in writing—will have a lasting impact on how often they achieve their goals and, ultimately, help shape the trajectory of their lives, for better or for worse.

Persuasion science is not about manipulation.

It is the ethical use of truthful words and images to help others recognise the genuine value of what is being proposed. It does not guarantee success, nor is it about tricking people into making poor decisions. Rather, it increases the likelihood that good ideas, honest requests and worthwhile proposals receive the consideration they deserve.

Without understanding this surprisingly simple science, our chances of success are, by definition, reduced.



Our Community Project to Help Young Adults

I have made it one of my community projects to introduce young adults to the science of ethical persuasion.

Within the limits of my availability each year, I offer educational sessions to schools, universities and business schools to help students understand how people make decisions and how they can ethically communicate more effectively throughout their lives.

These sessions are designed for young adults aged 15 years and older.

Schools may choose either:

- a complimentary presentation delivered via live video call; or
- an in-person presentation, where only reasonable travel and accommodation costs are requested.

Naturally, an in-person session allows for greater interaction, engagement and knowledge retention by students.

The purpose of these sessions is educational.

They are not intended as sales presentations. Their purpose is simply to ensure that young adults are introduced to a life skill that most would otherwise never encounter during their formal education.



Patrick van der Burght delivering a keynote at WESTPAC, one of Australia's four biggest banks.

About Patrick van der Burght

Allow me to give you a little background about myself so you understand where this is coming from. I am based in Melbourne, Australia, and have been teaching persuasion science since 2000.

I am a Founding Member and Licensed Trainer of the Cialdini Institute, established to preserve and advance the scientific legacy of **Dr Robert Cialdini**, the internationally recognised and **most quoted social psychologist** and New York Times bestselling author of *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion*, widely regarded as one of the best business books ever written.

On the Cialdini Institute website, I am one of the highest-ranked Licensed Trainers featured, an organisation with only a small number of Licensed Trainers worldwide authorised to teach Dr Cialdini's material.

In 2024, I co-authored *How to Hear YES More Often*, written as a practical companion to Dr Cialdini's book *Influence*, and I am the host of the *Ethical Persuasion Unlocked* podcast.

What Students Would Learn

The proposed sessions introduce students to:

- how human decision-making works;
- the science behind ethical persuasion;
- the universal Principles of Persuasion;
- research findings and case studies to highlight the effectiveness;
- practical strategies that can immediately improve communication;
- ways to strengthen university, scholarship and job applications;
- methods for building trust, credibility and long-lasting relationships;
- techniques that increase cooperation while maintaining integrity.

These presentations are not intended to replace the comprehensive 20-hour certification course that Cialdini Institute Licensed Trainers often deliver. One or two 90-minute sessions cannot produce mastery of any professional skill.

Instead, they **provide students with a high-quality, entertaining introduction and a practical toolbox of strategies** that businesses regularly invest significant resources to have taught to their employees through workshops and keynote presentations.

Should students, parents or educational institutions later wish to pursue more comprehensive training, they may certainly do so through Patrick or another Licensed Trainer of the Cialdini Institute. However, these school presentations are not designed to encourage course enrolments. Their purpose is simply to introduce an important life skill that many young adults would otherwise never encounter.

Why Your Support Matters

Schools regularly invite guest presenters to speak on topics such as cyber safety, online behaviour, career planning, wellbeing and leadership.

The science of ethical persuasion deserves similar consideration.

As parents and members of a parents' committee, you have the opportunity to encourage your school to consider introducing this topic to students.

Because I provide these presentations as part of a community project, my availability each year is necessarily limited. **As a general guideline, I am unlikely to repeat substantially the same presentation for the same educational institution within a two-year period.** Schools wishing to make the greatest use of this opportunity may therefore wish to combine multiple suitable year levels into a single presentation and, if desired, repeat the program several years later for the next generation of students.

The sessions can also integrate naturally into English, Business, Marketing or related subjects, with teachers choosing to build classroom activities around the presentation before or afterwards if they wish.



Dr Robert Cialdini speaking at BRAND MINDS.

A Life Skill That Will Never Become Obsolete

Many technical and business skills become outdated within only a few years as industries, technology and workplaces evolve.

The science of ethical persuasion is different.

Although Dr Robert Cialdini has been researching and teaching this science for more than forty years, its importance has not diminished; rather, it has continued to grow.

This is because human nature has not changed. What has changed is the amount of information competing for our attention every day. As our world becomes increasingly complex and information-rich, **people rely even more heavily on the intuitive decision-making processes that persuasion science helps us to understand.**

Because of this, ethical persuasion is not simply a valuable business skill.

It is a lifelong communication skill that impacts our relationships, education, careers, and our success in reaching goals that require the agreement, cooperation, or compliance of others.

A Request for Your Consideration

If you believe your school's students would benefit from learning about this important topic, I encourage you to discuss this opportunity with your parents' committee and your school's leadership.

A similar letter to this one, aimed at educators, that you could use, can be found here:

<https://ethicalpersuasion.com.au/lettertoeducators>



It may prove to be one of the most practical, entertaining, and valuable educational experiences students receive before they enter the workforce.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this opportunity and for everything you do to support your children's education and future success.

Wishing you and your children an influential future,



Patrick van der Burght

Founding Member & Licensed Trainer of the Cialdini Institute

Speaker • Trainer • Consultant • Published Author

Teaching the Science of Ethical Persuasion since 2000

Website: ethicalpersuasion.com.au

Contact: ethicalpersuasion.com.au/contact

Podcast *Ethical Persuasion Unlocked* 'Young Adults' Episode:
ethicalpersuasion.com.au/podcast/0020

Resources for Further Exploration

If you would like to independently explore the science of ethical persuasion before making a decision, the following resources may be of interest:

About Patrick van der Burght

- Keynote presentation highlights video
ethicalpersuasion.com.au/keynote/
- Ethical Persuasion Unlocked – Episode 20
ethicalpersuasion.com.au/podcast/0020
- How to Hear YES More Often
yesmoreoften.com



About the Science

- Dr Robert Cialdini's Explainer Video
The Science of Persuasion (17 million views)
ethicalpersuasion.com.au/video-science-of-persuasion/
- The Cialdini Institute
www.cialdini.com
- World Economic Forum
<https://www.weforum.org/publications/the-future-of-jobs-report-2025/>
- Forbes
The Top 10 In-Demand Soft Skills to Learn in 2024
<https://tinyurl.com/5a6azz56>
- Forbes
Six Timeless Books for 2025
<https://tinyurl.com/56eprwjx>



Reference to Dr Cialdini by Educational Institutions

- [Harvard Business Review](#)
The Uses (and Abuses) of Influence
- [Harvard Business Impact](#)
Harnessing the Science of Persuasion
- [Stanford Business](#) – Matt Abrahams, teacher of
Strategic Communication, interviews Dr Cialdini
- [Arizona State University](#)
The Robert B. Cialdini Social Psychology Laboratories
- [Cambridge University](#)
The Cambridge Handbook of Compliance
- [Oxford Academic](#)
Book: Six Degrees of Social Influence: Science,
Application, and the Psychology of Robert Cialdini
- [The Open University](#)
Collaborative Problem Solving, Week 4, Influencing
- [Carnegie Mellon University Qatar](#)
Jocelyn Bélanger, professor of psychology,
recently awarded the 2025 Robert B. Cialdini Prize



Cialdini Prize

