



*method*

# COGNITIVE MANIPULATION

## PART 1: COGNITIVE BIASES

*controversial yet impossible to ignore...* How To Ethically Harness Built In Biases of Your Reader to Greatly Increase Your Influence & Sales.

*black-and-white fallacy*

*glittering generalities*

*loaded language*

“Far better it is to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs, even though checkered by failure, than to take rank with those poor spirits who neither enjoy much nor suffer much, because they live in the gray twilight that

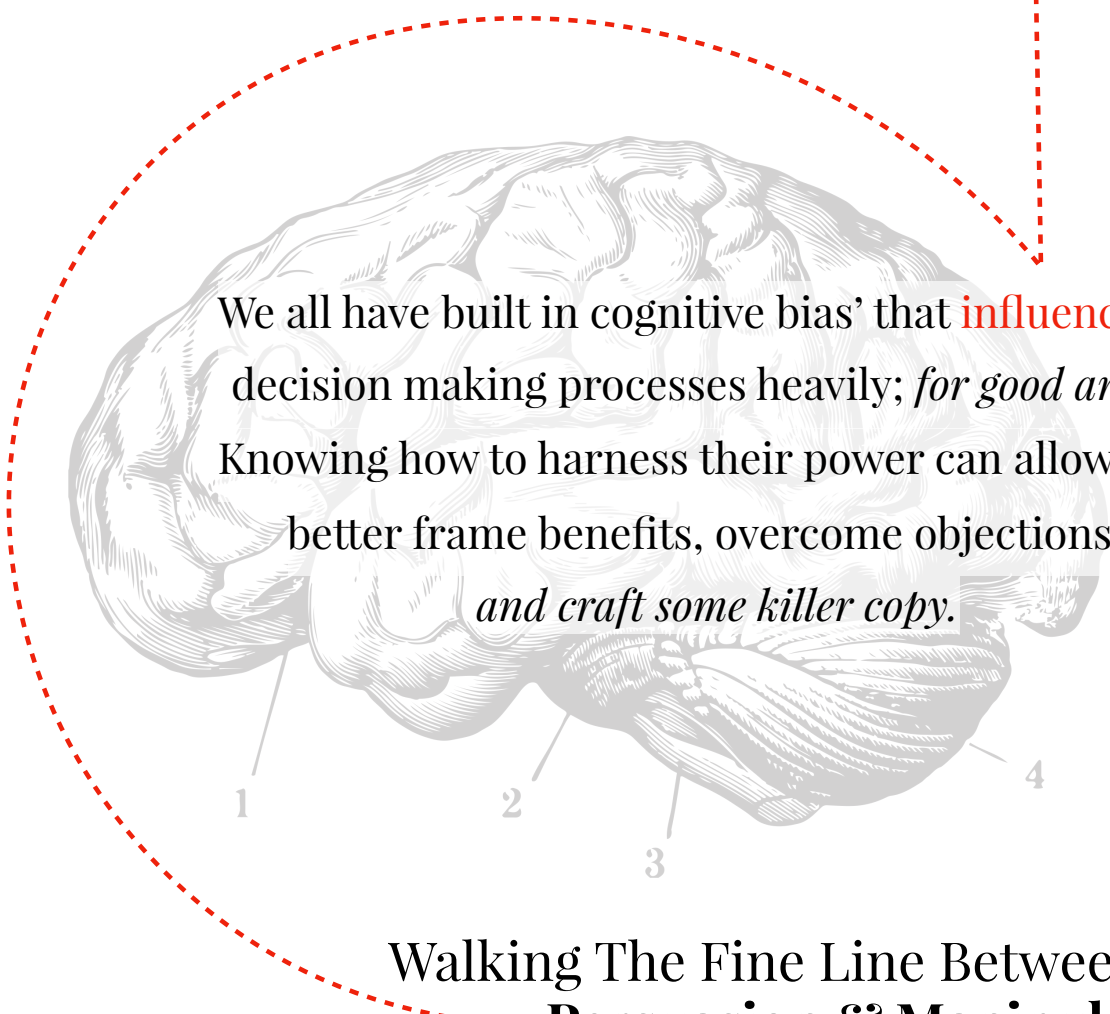
knows neither victory nor defeat.”

*fear appeal*

*thought-terminating cliché*

— Theodore Roosevelt

*authority bias*



We all have built in cognitive bias' that **influence** our decision making processes heavily; *for good and ill*. Knowing how to harness their power can allow us to better frame benefits, overcome objections... *and craft some killer copy.*

## Walking The Fine Line Between ➔ **Persuasion & Manipulation**

**Persuasion:** To cause (someone) to do something through reasoning or argument.

**Manipulation:** To control or influence cleverly, unfairly, or unscrupulously.

A cognitive bias is a mistake in reasoning, evaluating, remembering, or other cognitive process, often occurring as a result of holding onto one's preferences and beliefs regardless of contrary information. *There are as many as 180 known cognitive bias'.*

Leveraging cognitive biases may sound, *well*, manipulative... and at a certain level there's no denying the impact they have in the decision making process. Let's not forget, *every* form of communication is designed to influence in one way or another, marketing is not unique in that aspect. Our goal is not to manipulate, the implication being that we're acting *only with our interests in mind* and with unscrupulous tactics ... No, our goal is to persuade; the difference being that *everyone wins* in the equation, and our reader has come to their decision fairly.

Here's what you need to keep in mind, and this is a point I'll repeat many times in this guide... *If, and only if, you believe in your offers real value* should you consider influencing your reader with these strategies. Let's also not forget it's your ethical, and often legal, responsibility to be truthful & transparent in your efforts to close the sale. When done well, and with integrity, you'll come to find that not only do you have influence, *but you're genuinely helping others with your offers in a sustainable way.*

Let's now investigate a handful of "cognitive biases" and explore ways to ethically use them to increase the persuasive power of our marketing.



## THE BIAS: Anchoring Bias

People are often over-reliant on the first piece of information they hear. For example, a house for sale, set either before or at the start of negotiations, sets an arbitrary focal point for all following discussions. Prices discussed in negotiations that are lower than the anchor may seem reasonable, perhaps even cheap to the buyer, even if the prices are still relatively higher than the actual market value.

### *how to apply it*

Knowing that our reader may have preconceived notions about the price of our product/service will move us to **create our own anchor** comparing our pricing with something they're familiar with, and which sheds a favorable light on our pricing.

**Example:** “Clearly you can see how valuable this system is for your own business! How much would it cost you to hire a full time employee to do this for you? \$50,000, \$75,000, \$100,000? Even then you could justify the cost couldn't you? Well we've made it much easier, and much much more affordable for you at the low cost of only \$2000!”

**Anchor #1:** The price of a new employee [*expensive*].

**Anchor #2:** Even at the price of a new employee, you could justify the cost.

#### Other Ways to Apply...

- Price comparison chart with our competitors.
- Compared to 'trying to figure it out on your own'.
- Opportunity cost of not acting sooner.

In person or in writing this bias allows us to help our reader clearly see the value in what we're selling.

## THE BIAS: Bandwagon Effect

A phenomenon whereby **the rate of uptake of beliefs, ideas, fads and trends increases the more that they have already been adopted by others.** In other words, the bandwagon effect is characterized by the probability of individual adoption increasing with respect to the proportion who have already done so.

### *how to apply it*

Knowing that our reader are influenced by “the crowd” gives us quite a few pieces of ammunition to use in our copy. We want to demonstrate that a.) they're not alone in taking action, and/or b.) they may be left alone if they don't take action. *This is where the “9 out of 10 dentists agree” phrase was born.*

In our headlines we can use phrases such as “**Most people already know...**”, “**Thousands Have Figured Out...**”, “**Join Our 100s of Happy Customers**”, “**Tried & Tested by Dozens**”, “**Seen in Case after Case**”

We'll want to imply that they're missing out if they're not taking action. *FOMO if a hell of a drug.*

Testimonials... Lots of them. All over the place.

Tools that show “Richard just signed up!”. Emulate sites like [hotels.com](http://hotels.com) where it reports “12 people are viewing this room”.

**Bottom Line:** Demonstrate that they're not the first or last, and in-fact they're one of many; or that they could be... if they take action.



## THE BIAS: Choice-supportive

The tendency to retroactively ascribe positive attributes to an option one has selected. If a person chooses option A instead of option B, they are likely to ignore or downplay the faults of option A while amplifying those of option B. Conversely, they are also likely to notice and amplify the advantages of option A and not notice or de-emphasize those of option B.

### *how to apply it*

**Good Move!** In general our audience has made a choice to read our copy, buy our stuff, or use our services ~ *let's help them feel positive about it.* Buyers remorse kicks in when there isn't enough reasons to justify the purchase once the initial emotions wane, we must keep reminding them that it was a good decision; especially at high price points.

#### Ways to apply this principle...

- **Before the sale:** Near our calls to action we want to show positive testimonials to reinforce the positive choice they're about to make.
- **After the sale:** We can use positive language like "Good Job!, Awesome!, Great Choice!" in our follow up emails (you have follow up after the sale yes?)... Also don't forget to thank them for their purchase, that's why we call it a thank you page. Appreciation goes a long way.
- **Unannounced bonuses** (usually around the refund period) is a ninja way to add another positive touch point in the follow up. Something simple like a template (ahem) can be enough to turn a possible refund into a happy customer.

This bias is already built in our favor, **keep reinforcing the positive and address any possible negatives quickly.**



## THE BIAS: Pro-innovation bias

The belief that an innovation should be adopted by whole society without need of alternatives. The innovation's "champion" has such strong bias in favor of the innovation, that he/she may not see its limitations or weaknesses and continues to promote it nonetheless. **Simplified:** *Here's awesome innovative thing, everyone should use it, and those who don't are dumb - even if it has flaws.*

### *how to apply it*

Our readers often have a "shiny object syndrome" so we should *polish up* our offer by explaining why it's innovative, new, and exciting.

#### Ways to apply this principle...

- As we share our features and benefits explain why they're innovative... A simple way to do this is to compare it to the "old way" of doing something or simply state why it's innovative directly.
- **Example:** "Our Soda Has Zero Sugar (*feature*) Which Keeps You Looking Great While Tasting Great (*benefit*)... We Do This Without the Use of Nasty Sugar Substitutes With Our Innovative Blend of Healthy Nutrients (*Innovation*)."
- In our headlines we can literally start with the word innovative - "Innovative New Approach Unlocks Hidden Potential in Lazy People in 3 Simple to Follow Steps."
- Even if something isn't innovative to us, it may be to our customer. "*Innovative New Device Lets You Call People While In Your Car!*" For someone who knows what a cell phone is this isn't innovative, but if they've never heard of one? That's innovative!