

The Special Operations Research Office of The American University, under contract with the Department of the Army (SPWAR and ARO) is conducting a study on persuasive communication in the specific context of Viet Nam. In view of your own rich personal experiences in that country we invite your help in recalling for us some of your experiences which may be relevant to this problem.

We need single cases where persuasion was attempted by U.S. personnel, whether military or nonmilitary, in pursuit of some operationally meaningful objective.

The attached questionnaire contains a few questions and guidelines. The guidelines are suggested factors which may or may not be important in a particular case. Elaborate only on the items or variables which you feel apply in the case under consideration. If you will now glance at the questionnaire, you will see that we have the "guidelines" in parentheses, accompanying our questions. These guidelines will help you in organizing your thoughts and identify those factors we would most like you to consider in your answers, if and when they apply.

When we speak of "persuader", we mean either you or the person you describe as doing the persuasion you cite. By "audience", we mean the person or group who are the target of the persuasion attempt.

We need authentic, first-hand experiences, and it will be deeply appreciated if you are able to furnish one or more such experiences.

The questionnaire is provided for single examples. If you can summarize more cases, additional questionnaires will be provided.

Many thanks for your kind cooperation.

1. DESCRIBE THE OPERATIONAL PROBLEM AND THE MILITARY OR CIVILIAN SETTING INVOLVED.

2. WHAT WAS THE GOAL OF PERSUASION? (To what was the audience to be persuaded?)

3. DESCRIBE THE PERSUADER (YOU) AS ACTING IN THIS ROLE IN RESPECT TO THIS SITUATION.
(some of the relevant personality features, military or civilian status or rank,
degree of familiarity with local problems, language, people. Experience with the
audience, relationship to the audience; difficulties, supports, means available, etc.)

4. DESCRIBE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE AUDIENCE. GIVE A PICTURE OF THE PERSON(S) YOU WANTED TO PERSUADE. (Size of the group, ages, their tribal and religious backgrounds, whether or not they were mixed or similar in terms of any important social factor. What did they most want, what were their beliefs and feelings about the thing you wanted to persuade them to do? How did the person(s) feel about the U.S., the Vietnamese government, government troops, and the Viet Cong?)

5. DESCRIBE THE APPROACH USED BY THE PERSUADER (YOU). (How did the persuader proceed to achieve his goal? What did he do? Why?)

6. WHAT WAS THE RESULT? ITS INTERPRETATION? (Success or failure of the attempted persuasion. Which were the main factors responsible?)

7. CAN YOU IDENTIFY SOME OF THE PSYCHOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES INVOLVED IN THE APPROACH USED BY THE PERSUADER? (Were some of the following principles used? If so, please identify them by number. Or can you identify some other principles which are not listed but are relevant. Principles:

1. Know your audience, use only relevant information.
2. Tailor information content based on the audience's understanding and meaning.
3. Connect your objective in some way to the audience's aspirations and interests.
4. Seek common ground and common objectives.
5. Create an image of yourself, establishing your authority to speak on the subject.
6. Create controversy which can be resolved by following your advice.
7. Recall group membership to subject's mind if it serves your purpose.
8. Use symbols which have impact on the audience. Either attractive or fear inducing.
9. Take advantage of situational effects, select appropriate time, place, etc.
10. Don't forget that the object is not to argue but to persuade.
11. Make the audience act out your objective as part of the process of persuasion.
12. Make use of peoples' predisposition to criticize.
13. Don't talk down and don't talk over their heads.
14. If you feel the audience is hostile, present both sides of the story.
15. After making your point, try to get the audience or an influential member of the audience to commit himself publicly.
16. Use a logical approach with the better educated, and an emotional approach with the less educated. (Logical vs. emotional):
17. Draw the desired conclusion yourself and don't leave this to an uneducated audience. (Be explicit.)
18. Repetition increases the chance of the audience's acceptance.
19. If your material is meaningful (to them), vivid and emphasized, it will have a more long lasting effect.
20. The conclusion is better retained than the arguments leading to it.
21. We all learn what we are interested in. If content goes counter to the audience's values and motives, it is more easily dismissed.)