

Ideas & other training

- [How to do Digital Outreach and Troll Patrol](#) Web site, XR Scotland
- [The Nervous Rebel's Guide to Social Media](#) Document XR Scotland
- [Social Media Trolls: A Practical Guide for Dealing With Impossible People](#)
- [Campaigners create Twitter 'fact avalanche' to combat climate untruths](#)
- [Do not feed the climate trolls](#) - Article from ScienceAlert.com about how they deal with Climate Trolls.
- [Message to White Allies from A Black Anti-Racism Expert: You're Doing It Wrong](#) - this is about Black Lives Matter, but the principles are still useful
- [You're not going to believe what I'm about to tell you](#) - excellent article about how humans react to information that does not fit their world view.

Insights from Psychology

The Conditions Required for Successful Persuasion

According to [research by Cialdini, Petty, & Cacioppo \(1981\)](#) persuasion works best differently in two different conditions:

- When the information feels highly relevant to the person being persuaded: quality of the argument is a key factor (central route)
- the information feels less relevant to the person being persuaded: expertise of the speaker is a key factor (peripheral route)

Attitude changes from the former route are more likely to be enduring and predictive of later behaviour. They concluded that one consequence of the different routes to persuasion was that changes induced via the central route tended to be enduring and predictive of subsequent behavior.

- Further elaboration on central/peripheral route, John T. Cacioppo and Richard E. Petty (1984), "The Elaboration Likelihood Model of Persuasion", in *NA - Advances in Consumer Research* Volume 11, eds. Thomas C. Kinneer, Provo, UT : Association for Consumer Research, Pages: 673-675.

Mood & Persuasion

Bless et al. (1990) found that:

people in good moods are less likely to use the 'central route' that focuses on argument quality, whereas people in bad moods are more willing to 'elaborate' - i.e. think through and evaluate argument quality i.e. are more likely to use the 'central route' that leads to enduring attitude change - IF you can persuade them!

Bless, H., Bohner, G., Schwarz, N., & Strack, F. (1990). Mood and persuasion: A cognitive response analysis. *Personality and social psychology bulletin*, 16(2), 331-345.

How do these 'routes' work

The final article (Chaiken, 1980) is a really in-depth document that explains how the two 'routes' work (referred to in the paper as systematic and heuristic processing. Heuristics refer to the idea of using 'rules of thumb', so this is the peripheral route and systematic = central). It's worth reading if you want to understand these concepts better, but to fully understand it requires a working knowledge of ANOVA stats methodology.

The key finding is as follows: 'In the first study, high consequences subjects exhibited significantly greater initial opinion change in response to messages containing six arguments but were unaffected by the communicator's likability. Conversely, low consequences subjects exhibited significantly greater opinion change in response to the likable communicator but were unaffected by the amount of argumentation provided.

In Experiment 2, subjects for whom the message topic was high in personal relevance showed slightly greater opinion change when receiving five arguments from an unlikable communicator than when receiving one argument from a likable source. In contrast, subjects for whom the topic was low in personal relevance exhibited significantly greater opinion change when they received one argument from a likable (vs. five arguments from an unlikable) communicator'

To interpret: for those with a high level of involvement - arguments matter. To those with low involvement - likability matters.

NOTE: DON'T interpret this as 'it's a good idea to be unlikeable'! The point is that arguments matter for people who feel highly involved in a situation.

Chaiken, S. (1980). Heuristic versus systematic information processing and the use of source versus message cues in persuasion. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 39(5), 752.

So what does this all mean:

We want people to be using elaborated, evaluative thinking if we want them to have enduring attitude change - focusing on personal relevance of the issue results in people using this 'central route'

If, however, people seem likely to only process the information in a quick, simplistic way, focus on being likeable, on conveying expertise, and keeping them in a good mood!
