

Propaganda techniques

Edward Filene helped establish the Institute of Propaganda Analysis in 1937 to educate the American public about the nature of propaganda and how to recognize propaganda techniques. Filene and his colleagues identified the seven most common 'tricks of the trade' used by successful propagandists (Marlin 102-106: Propaganda critic: introduction)

<http://mason.gmu.edu/~amcdonal/Bibliography.html#Marlin>

These seven techniques are called:

- ★ name calling
- ★ glittering generalities
- ★ transfer
- ★ testimonial
- ★ plain folks
- ★ card stacking
- ★ band wagon.

Name calling

- ★ Used to create fear and arouse prejudice by using negative words to create an unfavourable opinion or hatred against a group, beliefs, ideas or institutions.
- ★ This method calls for a conclusion without examining the evidence.
- ★ Name calling is used as a substitute for arguing the merits of an idea, belief, or proposal.
- ★ It is often employed using sarcasm and ridicule the actual idea or proposal.

Glittering generalities

- ★ Glittering generalities are words that have different positive meanings for individual subjects, but are linked to highly valued concepts.
- ★ When these words are used, they demand approval without thinking, simply because such an important concept is involved.
- ★ For example, when a person is asked to do something in 'defence of democracy' they are more likely to agree. The concept of democracy has a positive connotation to them because it is linked to a concept that they value.
- ★ Words often used as glittering generalities are honour, glory, love of country, and freedom.

Transfer

- ★ Transfer is a technique used to carry over the authority and approval of something we respect and revere, to something the propagandist would have us accept.
- ★ Propagandists often employ symbols (e.g. waving the flag) to stir our emotions and win our approval.

Propaganda techniques

Testimonial

- ★ Propagandists use this technique to associate a respected person or someone with experience to endorse a product or cause by giving it their stamp of approval hoping that the intended audience will follow their example.

Plain folks

- ★ Propagandists use this approach to convince the audience that the spokesperson is from humble origins, someone they can trust and who has their interests at heart.
- ★ Propagandists have the speaker use ordinary language and mannerisms to reach the audience and identify with their point of view.

Card stacking

- ★ Selective omission.
- ★ It involves only presenting information that is positive to an idea or proposal and omitting information contrary to it.
- ★ Although the majority of information presented by the card stacking approach is true, it omits important information.

Bandwagon

- ★ Bandwagon is an appeal to the subject to follow the crowd, to join in because others are doing so as well.
- ★ Bandwagon propaganda is, essentially, trying to convince the subject that one side is the winning side, because more people have joined it.
- ★ Subjects of bandwagon are compelled to join in because everyone else is doing so as well.

Lesser of two evils

- ★ The 'lesser of two evils' technique tries to convince us of an idea or proposal by presenting it as the least offensive option.
- ★ This technique is often implemented to convince people of the need for sacrifices or to justify difficult decisions.
- ★ This technique is often accompanied by adding blame on an enemy country or political group.
- ★ One idea or proposal is often depicted as one of the only options or paths.

Simplification

- ★ Simplification reduces a complex situation to a clear-cut choice involving good and evil. This is similar to the 'lesser of two evils' technique'

Propaganda techniques

Repetition

- ★ Propagandists use this technique to drum the message into the target audience's subconscious by repeating keywords or phrases over and over until resistance to the message weakens.
- ★ The target audience eventually accepts the message often without even realizing it.

Fear

- ★ Propagandists play on an audience's fear that something bad will happen to them unless they do what has been suggested to them.

Red herring

- ★ A deliberate attempt to change a subject or divert an argument, often to mislead an audience.
- ★ Propagandists use this diversionary tactic to draw one's attention away from the real subject.

Symbols

- ★ Propagandists use words, designs, place, ideas and music to symbolise ideas and concepts with emotional content.

Faulty cause and effect

- ★ Propagandists claim that the use of a product, idea or policy creates a positive result without providing any supporting evidence.

Compare and contrast

- ★ Propagandists lead the audience to believe that one product, idea or policy is better than another without offering real proof. This technique is similar to faulty cause and effect.

Slogans

- ★ Propagandists use catchy slogans or phrases that are easily remembered in place of a complicated and perhaps more accurate explanation.