

Psychological Ventriloquism: The Secret of Conjurers, Conmen and Comedians

By Blair Warren

Psychological Ventriloquism: The Secret of Conjurers, Conmen and Comedians

Blair Warren

blair@blairwarren.com

www.blairwarren.com <http://www.blairwarren.com>

“Control the manner in which a man interprets his world, and you have gone a long way toward controlling his behavior.” - Stanley Milgram

A magician using the crudest of methods can baffle the most intelligent of audiences. With a few simple props and an intriguing story, an experienced conman can make a fool of virtually anyone. And with the proper delivery, a comedian can pry a laugh from even the most stoic among us.

What skill do these people share that grants them their power over others?

They are masters of Psychological Ventriloquism. They have mastered the art of inducing unconscious assumptions in others.

When a magician levitates his assistant he runs a hoop up and down her body “proving” nothing is holding her up. Of course, he’s proving nothing of the sort, but he is leading us to assume such a conclusion. And as a result, “magic” becomes possible.

Con artists turn everyday items and circumstances into tools they can use to elicit our trust almost instantly. Documentation, credentials, circumstances, relationships. You name it, if we assume it trustworthy, con artists have ways to turn this trust against us.

How do comedians use our assumptions against us?

Consider this joke:

“My grandmother has been walking three miles a day every day for the last five years and now we don’t know where the hell she is.”

What makes this joke work?

It works because by the time we hear “last five years,” we have unconsciously made an assumption that sets us up for the punchline. We assume the grandmother has been exercising. And this is exactly what the comedian needs us to assume in order to make us laugh.

We cannot help but make assumptions. We take in information so quickly that we are constantly, and more significantly, unconsciously, making assumptions and too often fail to distinguish between what we “saw” and what we “assumed.”

This mechanism, which few recognize and even fewer appreciate, is responsible for persuasion in its most powerful form.

Why? Because of what I have coined our third tendency of human nature and that is:

People sometimes believe what they are told, but never doubt what they conclude.

Don't believe me?

Imagine within minutes of meeting a stranger he tells you, “You can trust me.” Now imagine that within minutes of meeting a second stranger the thought crosses your mind, “Hey, I can trust this guy.” Which stranger will you trust more? I thought so.

The point is, while most of us struggle to communicate our messages to others, there are those among us who take a different approach. They not only understand our tendency to make unconscious assumptions, they have taken it one step further. They have perfected the art of leading us to make the assumptions they need us to make in order to get us to do what they want us to do.

The less you rely on direct communication and instead strive to induce specific assumptions in others, the more powerful your communication will be.

So how does one develop this ability? By studying the masters of the art.

Watch a magic or comedy act and see if you can spot when you're being led to make specific assumptions and what is being done to get you to do so.

Buy a book of jokes and tear them apart. Break them down and discover the source of their magic.

You can also learn a lot by studying riddles. Consider the following:

What rock group has four members, all of whom are dead and one of which was murdered?

Already know the answer? Imagine how much harder it would have been had you not been looking specifically for misleading language. Better yet, try it on someone else and watch their unconscious assumptions trip them up.

Don't know the answer? Rest assured it is right in front of you. (Write me if you're still stumped.)

And finally, if you've ever been the victim of a con, think back and reconstruct what happened to discover where you went wrong in your assumptions about the situation.

Each of these suggestions will help you not only increase your awareness of how often we make unconscious assumptions, but also how reliably others can get us to do so.

When you learn their tricks, your communication will take on a power that few can resist. Not only will you be more likely to get what you want from others, you will have them believing it was their idea all along.

Blair Warren is a television producer, a writer and a persuasion strategist/consultant. You can learn more about him, his work and sign up for his free newsletter Blair Warren's Crooked Wisdom at www.blairwarren.com .

[Get-Articles.com : 1000's of reprintable business and internet marketing-related articles.](#)

[Submit your article for reprint.](#)