

The Secret of Socrates

Socrates was one of the greatest philosophers in humankind. He changed the course of human thought. He never told people they were wrong. Instead, he presented every question to be answered with a yes response, winning one admission after another. After many affirmations, people found themselves supporting or embracing a conclusion they would have bitterly objected to just minutes earlier.

Socrates' secret is simple, begin all conversations on things which you agree. Do not begin by discussing differences. Emphasize common purposes and keep emphasizing these things. Keep your opponent saying yes and, if possible, never permit him to say no. No is difficult to overcome. It is of great importance to get people moving in the affirmation direction soonest.

This is a very simple technique but often overlooked and neglected as if some people get a rush off of self-importance by antagonizing others at the outset. Why antagonize others? Carnegie concludes by citing an ancient Chinese proverb, "He who treads softly goes far."

Principle 14: Get the other person to say "Yes, Yes", immediately

Comment: *This concept of getting people to agree early and incrementally is a method also used in argumentation and discussed in my series on Argumentation. This is particularly used when structuring a prejudicial argument which is often used in legal argumentation. Arguments are designed to move people in a specific direction but the conclusion is often unclear because the questions are asked in a disjunctive manner. After the requisite agreements have been met they are assembled in a logical manner with a conclusive delivery showing agreement with something that would not have been accepted earlier in its whole.*