

Boeke

DE WET, J.C. 1988. THE ART OF PERSUASIVE COMMUNICATION. CAPE TOWN, JUTA AND CO. LTD.

The purpose and scope of this book is to provide an overview of oral, verbal, one-to-many persuasion in a democratic context. It is the *unusual* combination of persuasion in a democracy that makes this book both valuable and interesting reading. All too often one perceives that persuasion is limited to authoritarian forms of government; or connoted with negative overtones. The author, through extensive attention to this issue, succeeds in pointing out that democracy should not only be perceived as a form of government, but more importantly that democracy is an ideology. As such, persuasion is essential to ensure that democracy remains the preferred ideology in a given society, and that the legitimacy or desirability of other ideologies is questioned. Thus, it is essential that persuasion as a process of communication functions to the fullest advantage (or to the service) of the democracy.

This book will appeal especially to the reader who has a limited background knowledge of persuasive communication as it provides clear and precise operational definitions for every concept (eg. democracy, communication, public opinion, etc.) utilized. The historical origins of these concepts are also traced. The second chapter provides interesting reading concerning the use of rhetoric in persuasion. Due to concise summaries of the works of great philosophers or rhetoric, the writings of these philosophers are easily understood. (Plato and Aristotle are no longer Greek to me!)

Due to the influential position that the mass media enjoys in a modern democracy, a closer look is taken at the rôle that it plays in persuasive communication. To illustrate how the mass media utilizes its power, reference is made to the agenda-setting function of the media, and how the media thus has an influence on public opinion (a variable inherent to any democracy). A large value is placed on public opinion in a democracy as the people like to think they are in control of government. As a result, the author points out that citizens of a democracy do not want to perceive that they are being influenced by an external force. As a result, the persuader has to motivate the respondent to change (as desired), by referring to the various

needs and attitudes of the respective respondents. The author illustrates how the respondent has a need for security and thus why consistency is imperative in persuasion in order to prevent cognitive dissonance amongst respondents. A motivational element that has not been discussed is that of the timing/urgency of the persuasion. A strong perception exists, for example, that the South African government has made ample use of this technique, specifically before elections, by raiding into neighbouring territories that are propagated as a security risk.

A section of this book deals with various major perspectives of mass persuasion. All of the perspectives concentrate exclusively on propaganda. These perspectives include the popular contemporary perspectives on propaganda (the basic techniques of propaganda such as name-calling, bandwagon, etc. are discussed here); bureaucratic propaganda; and Jacques Ellul's well-known perspectives of propaganda. Full concentration on propaganda tends to make the book superficial in that the title of the book is *The Art of Persuasive Communication* and not Propaganda within a Democracy. Furthermore, the author states that the terms mass persuasion or propaganda are interchangeable. This is misleading. Other forms of mass persuasive communication such as education, indoctrination, and seduction also exist.

As could be expected of a book of this nature, the language styles and settings of political persuasion are discussed. With regard to the latter, the author comes to the conclusion that "attempts to persuade through logical reasoning have given way to attempts to manipulate audiences through psychological tactics".

A section of the last chapter of the book provides a practical application of how persuasion can be utilized, with special reference to persuasive issues revolving around South African governmental communication. The author discusses the image problem facing South Africa, and states that the problem is primarily due to the communication (or lack thereof) between the government and the media (both local and international). It is suggested that in order to improve the communication between these two parties, thereby minimizing conflict, the South African government should follow a policy of "news media diplomacy".

The *value* of this book lies in the fact that the central theme, namely that the use of persuasion in a democracy is just as essential, if not more so,

than its use in any other ideological society, is reiterated throughout the book. Hopefully, this will help ensure that the misperception regarding persuasion diminishes.

ANDREA CRYSTAL

WILCOX, D.L. AULT, P.H. & AGEE, W.K. (1989) PUBLIC RELATIONS, STRATEGIES AND TACTICS. HARPER & ROW, NEW YORK

Hoewel die subtitel die indruk skep dat die skrywers moontlik net gepoog het om nog 'n wenresep vir skakelwerk daar te stel, dek hierdie nuwe toevoeging tot die skakelkunde-literatuur 'n veel wyer veld. Ten spyte van die Amerikaanse inslag en die oënskynlik vreemde rangskikking van die stof, bied hierdie werk tog nuwe insigte tot die uitgebreide vaardighede wat van die hedendaagse skakelbeampte verwag word.

Die boek is in vyf afdelings verdeel, te wete die rol van skakelwerk, die skakelproses, strategie, toepassing en taktiek. In die eerste afdeling, wat uit ses hoofstukke bestaan, word die rol van skakelwerk in die gemeenskap uiteengesit. Hoewel hoofstuk drie oor die geskiedenis van die skakelwese weinig nuuts oplewer, bied die opsomming van John Naisbitt se nuwe tendense in die Amerikaanse samelewing (pp. 54-55) tog stof tot nadenke. Die merkwaardige ooreenkomstige met die Suid-Afrikaanse situasie is opvallend. Die vroeë insluiting van 'n hoofstuk oor die etiek van skakelwerk (afdeling 1, hoofstuk 6) kom ook as 'n verrassing.

In afdeling twee (hoofstukke 7-10) word die vier stappe in die skakelproses bespreek. Ten spyte van die beklemtoning van die belang van navorsing in die voorwoord tot hoofstuk sewe (p. 129), verkies die skrywers om net twee bladsye (pp. 133 en 135) aan die informele navorsingsmetodes af te staan. Die versuim van die skrywers om nie meer aandag aan die belangwekkende tegniek van fokusgroepe te wy nie, moet betreur word. Voorts dui die insluiting van 'n kommunikasie-oudit as 'n informele navorsingstegniek en die omskrywing daarvan (pp. 135-136) op die oppervlakkige

benadering wat plek-plek aangetref word. By 'n latere hantering van die kommunikasie-oudit, (pp. 205-206) word die benutting van formele navorsingstegnieke steeds misken. Die gefragmenteerde aanbieding van die stof oor navorsingstegnieke (hoofstukke 7 en 9) mag vir die leser verwarrend wees.

Afdeling drie (hoofstukke 11-13) word aan ooredingskommunikasie gewy. Dit is vreemd dat die gedeelte oor boodskapontwikkeling (pp. 221-230) so ver van die hantering van die kommunikasie-media (p. 511 ev.) geskei is. Aangesien die boodskap in die medium ingebed word, is dit noodsaaklik dat die boodskap op die medium afgestem word. Dit sou dus wensliker wees om hierdie twee onderwerpe in dieselfde hoofstuk in te sluit. Die afdeling oor die etiek van ooreding in hoofstuk 11 (p. 234) is 'n verdere voorbeeld van die fragmentariese hantering van sekere onderwerpe omdat hoofstuk 6 reeds aan die etiese aspekte van skakelwerk gewy is.

Hoofstuk 13 oor die Amerikaanse reg kan geïgnoreer word.

Die sterkpunt van die werk is afdeling 4 waar die toepassingsgebiede van skakelwerk volledig behandel word. Gevallestudies word spaarsaam, dog sinvol, gebruik. Die gedeeltes oor persoonlikheidskakelwerk (pp. 478-482) en die bemarking van vermaak (pp. 483-485) bied interessante leesstof.

Hoewel die skrywers tot die laaste afdeling gewag het om die media waarmee die skakelbeampte werk toe te lig, word hierdie aspek nie afgeskep nie. Die hoofstuk oor die nuwe tegnologie in die kommunikasieveld (hfst. 21) kan verwelkom word. Boonop word die stof interessant en verteerbaar aangebied en dit kan die student moontlik motiveer om meer oor die nuwe tegnologie te wete te kom. Die leesbare informele styl wat deurgans gebruik word, is 'n pluspunt. Dit verhoog die gebruikswaarde van die boek.

In die geheel gesien, is die boek 'n welkome toevoeging tot die skakelkunde-literatuur. Dit kan met vrug op voorgraadse vlak gebruik word.

BRAAM VAN DER VYVER