

# 60 SECONDS WITH

**The new book you wrote with G. Richard Shell, “The Art of Woo: Using Strategic Persuasion To Sell Your Ideas,” is all about sharpening your skills of persuasion. What are the best ways to do that?**

One is making sure your idea is really simple. Look, most people forget what they hear at work. In fact, there’s a really interesting study that says 78 percent of all executives slept through a presentation in the last month. So keep your ideas simple.

If you can, tell a story. I think we all know this from putting our kids to bed. Kids love stories. It’s also true for adults. And even really smart, numbers-oriented people tend to remember stories. They don’t remember statistics.

And then, third, make sure you’re asking the other person to take some small action once they agree to an idea. Action tends to deepen belief over time. But don’t ask them to take a big step that requires them to stretch way outside of their comfort zone.

**You quote J.P. Morgan as saying people have two reasons for everything they do, “a good reason and the real reason.” Why is that important?**



**Mario Moussa**  
Management consultant,  
Wharton instructor

What we found in talking to executives all over the world is that organizations are political. People tend to focus on themselves, on how they’re seen, on whether they’re getting support or not. So all those issues that often go on behind the scenes you need to take into account when you’re getting ready to sell an idea.

There’s the rational side of work life, which we tend to talk a lot about. And

then there’s the irrational or emotional side, which we really don’t pay enough attention to. And you need to pay attention to both sides. You want to make a good case for an idea — at the same time you have to remember you’re talking to flesh and blood human beings about it.

**You’ve sold your idea. When are you truly done with it?**

When you move from me to we. That actually goes back to a poem written by Muhammad Ali. One of the things he’s famous for is having the shortest poem in the English language: “Me, we.” And that’s the movement of persuasion. You start with your idea, but then in the end, others are carrying it forward.

— Brian Moore