

THE **YELLOW** CAKE PRINCIPLE

*Your Recipe for Influence
and Success*

By Roger Grannis



We are all in sales. Whether we're product managers trying to motivate sales teams to sell new solutions, chief information officers seeking budget approval for stronger firewalls, human resources professionals trying to get a seat at the executive table, or parents trying to get our children to clean their rooms, nothing happens until someone convinces someone else to do something.

THE YELLOW CAKE PRINCIPLE demystifies and simplifies the sales process so you can be more influential and persuasive, whether your job title includes the word *sales* or not.



When I was ten, my mother invited a homeless woman to our house to bake a cake. There, in our kitchen, with mixing bowls and flour and sugar spread out on the counter, I watched my mother turn a stranger into a friend and improve someone's life.

When I grew up and started a career in sales, I realized my job was to do exactly what my mother had done: turn strangers into friends and improve people's lives. THE YELLOW CAKE PRINCIPLE will show you how to do just that. If you're hungry for more details, you can find them in the book *The Yellow Cake Principle: Your Recipe for Influence and Success*, available on Amazon (be sure to search in the Books department).

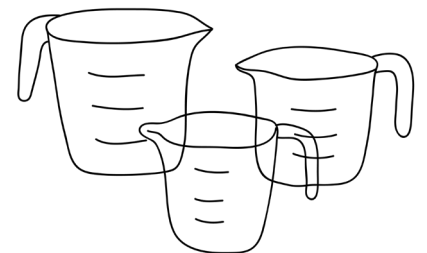
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EASY AS ONE-TWO-THREE

THE YELLOW CAKE PRINCIPLE recipe has three ingredients, and all it takes is one CUP.

- Connect** Make a true, human-to-human connection.
- Understand** Listen. Hear. Ask questions.
Understand. Acknowledge.
- Present** Present an opportunity that improves someone's life.



CONNECT

A few years ago, I conducted a research study with the top sales producers at a Fortune 50 financial services company. I asked them, How do you get appointments with people you've never met?

Over and over, I heard two things:

1. Find something in common.

When we have something in common with someone, we feel an affinity. We feel that they are just like us. We begin to trust. Strangers become friends.

2. Bring something of value.

Offering something of value is not only a nice thing to do—it's good for business. Humans are hardwired to return favors. When you do something nice for me, I feel inclined to do something nice for you. Good deeds also set you apart.

You can also gain favor by paying genuine compliments. Compliments feel good, as long as they're sincere. Genuine compliments create connection. They open doors. Build relationships.

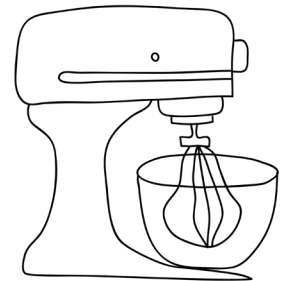
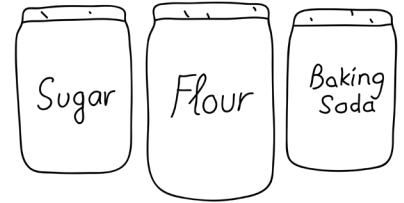
UNDERSTAND

Most people think that, if you want to get better at influencing, you have to get better at speaking. The opposite is true. If you want to get better at influencing, you need to become a better listener.

Listening is the key to influence.

Listening shows people you care. It builds trust. It builds relationships. It gets people to like you. People will be much more receptive to what you have to say if you first hear what *they* have to say.

Listening also allows you to gather the information you need to ensure your solution is a good fit and, if it is, customize your description so that it motivates people to act.



How do you listen—*really* listen? Here's an easy-to-remember formula: EARS.

ENGAGE

Engage your whole self—ears, mind, and body. Lean forward. Look the other person in the eye. Use your body language to show them you care.

ASK

Ask a variety of questions. Start with broad, open-ended questions that encourage people to think deeply and share. Save specific, closed-ended questions for later in the conversation.

REFLECT

Reflect back what you're hearing. Empathize, acknowledge feelings. Ask follow-up questions to clarify and/or probe deeper.

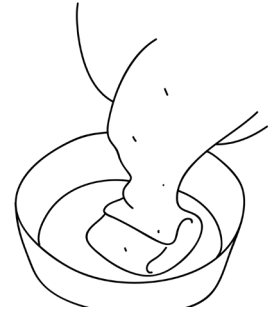
SUMMARIZE

Summarize what you heard. When the other person nods or acknowledges your summary with words like *yes* or *exactly*, you'll know they feel heard and understood.



PRESENT

Make your message memorable and repeatable. The person you are trying to influence may have to convince someone else, such as a supervisor or a spouse. A catchy message is more likely to be remembered and get passed along to the decision maker. Here are five ways to do that.



1. USE A TITLE OR SLOGAN

Titles and slogans are easy to remember. For example, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration’s campaign to curtail impaired driving delivers a pointed message: “Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over.”

2. TELL A STORY

Stories are the most powerful form of human communication. Stories help bring concepts to life. They touch the emotions. A message embedded in a story will make a greater impact than simply sharing the message. You can find stories everywhere in your life—at home, at work, in your travels. Be sure to connect the moral of your story to the point you want to make.

3. MARSHAL THE POWER OF THREE

Consolidate your message into three key points. People won’t remember your fourth, fifth, or tenth point. But they will remember three. This tenet is as effective for ads (the iPad Air is “light, bright, full of might”) as it is for advice (“Stop, drop and roll”).

4. PAINT A VISION OF A BRIGHTER TOMORROW

Help people imagine what life will be like once your solution is implemented. Martin Luther King Jr. used this technique in his famous 1963 speech on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. He repeated the phrase “I have a dream” eight times, each time describing a future without racism and a country “transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.”

How will you describe the future to people considering your solution? It can be as simple as a few words: *This time next year, you can breathe easier knowing your first year was a big success.*

5. GIVE THE BOTTOM LINE UP FRONT (BLUF)

Another way to make your message memorable is to cut right to the chase—for example, giving an executive summary before providing the details. BLUF is an especially useful tool when speaking to busy executives.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Last year, my sister and I said our final goodbye to Mom. She was ninety-five.

Before writing the eulogy, I asked the minister for advice. She said, “Tell the yellow cake story. It’s the lesson I try to teach as a minister—how to treat people right, how to live your life with kindness. It’s your mother’s legacy.”

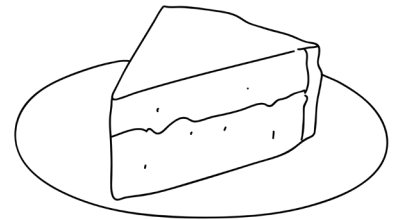
So that’s what I did.

Someday, the time will come for someone to stand up and say nice things about each one of us.

What would you like those things to say about you? How you used your gifts to advance a fulfilling and successful career? Sure, why not? But why stop there? Why not use your influence—THE YELLOW CAKE PRINCIPLE—to do something more, something bigger?

Why not help make the world a better place by turning every stranger into a friend?

What will your legacy be? What kind of cake will you bake—and share?



ABOUT ROGER GRANNIS

Roger is a sales communications expert. He works with organizations of all sizes that want to increase revenues, reduce turnover, and improve employee satisfaction. His clients include GE, PepsiCo, Foot Locker, Royal Bank of Scotland, Wayne Fueling Systems, Vertex, Symantec, and UL Solutions.

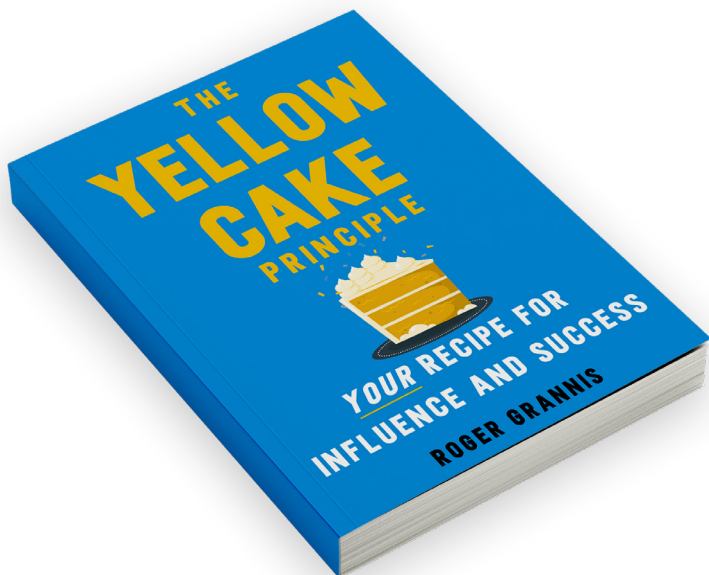
Known for his energy, relatability, and humor, Roger is in high demand as a keynote speaker. He is a TEDx speaker and the past president of the New England chapter of the National Speakers Association.

Roger has used his influencing skills to get a great deal on a new hot water tank, lead a troop of rambunctious Boy Scouts, and talk his way out of being held at gunpoint.

He never met Julia Child, but he was an extra in the movie *Julie & Julia*. His favorite cake is yellow cake with chocolate frosting on the outside and vanilla between the layers.

Learn more at GrannisGroup.com
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Find *The Yellow Cake Principle: Your Recipe for Influence and Success* on Amazon, in the Books department.



Roger Grannis
Sales and Influence Expert,
Author

“

Authentic, succinct, and practical, *The Yellow Cake Principle* is a must-read for anyone who wants to succeed in business and in life.

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**—Robert Reiss, CEO
The CEO Forum Group**