

# One Of the Simplest Subliminal Techniques

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Monday, 18 August 2008

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{bot\_wrgoogle}Suppose I were to ask you and a room full of others to make your best guesses as to when Thomas Aquinas was born. If you didn't have any idea other than "sometime in the middle ages," the average guess might be the year 1200. But what if I first announced, "Claudius Ptolemy was born in the year 85," and then asked when Aquinas was born? Would that change anything? It seems that it shouldn't, since it is irrelevant. But it almost certainly would change the guesses.

They would be much earlier, perhaps around the year 800. You and the others might not be aware that the first statement is affecting your estimates. You also probably wouldn't suspect that subliminal techniques were being used on you, in this case a simple trick called "anchoring."

## Anchoring As A Subliminal Technique

Researchers actually do tests like this, and consistently get the same effect. Anchoring, in the terminology of behavioral economics, is our tendency to give weight to whatever facts or figures are introduced - regardless of their relevance - if we have insufficient information. Obviously, if you knew the date of birth you would not be swayed by this technique. However, "insufficient information" is a common occurrence in life, isn't it? That's why this subliminal trick works.

As you might guess, since the term is used by researchers in the field of behavioral economics, that the trick is used in financial matters. It is. In fact, the simplest example is one you'll recognize immediately. Before you can form an opinion about the value of a product being sold on late night television, the announcer says something like "This normally sells for \$189, but order right now and it's yours for only \$59."

There may or may not be evidence provided as to why it is worth \$189. The truth is that just saying it will increase the perceived value in listener's minds. If you had to previously place a value on it, you might have said just \$19 - if you had nothing for an "anchor." But now that you have heard it is worth \$189, it seems like a great deal at \$59.

This trick is used in negotiations all the time. For example, you might think your house is worth the \$285,000 you're asking, but there is almost always insufficient information to be certain. So when a buyer offers \$239,000, you say no, but you're suddenly even less certain about the value. Then when the first buyer's secret partner later makes an offer of \$260,000, it seems reasonable. The only offer you've had was \$239,000, and with that as an anchor, you may be happy to get \$260,000, so you agree. You may never know that with time the house would have sold for \$20,000 more.

Employers can use subliminal techniques like this too. For example, a furniture store owner might mention to the sales people how much they make if they sell 70 items per month. If the employees have no idea what the monthly average is for the industry, they'll probably now guess that 70 is normal. They'll work to achieve that, not knowing that selling 40 pieces of furniture monthly is closer to the average.

Besides protecting yourself, there is another reason to learn about these subliminal techniques: You can use them on yourself. If you want to write, for example, get to know prolific writers. If you know a writer who writes forty pages daily, this will affect what you believe and therefore do, versus knowing one who writes just five pages daily. Though you may not write that much yourself, you have an "anchor" that will probably encourage you to do more than you would have.

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