



## Cheap Psychological Tricks



A colleague of mine tells a story that I would like to share.

“In a recent merger situation, I was hired by the chairman of the board. The new CEO pretended to agree with the idea of introducing dialogue to his senior team. I knew better; his behavior told a very different story. He introduced me as the [“consultant” or the “coach”] (not the most credible introduction within a . . . corporation) and asked, ‘What cheap psychological trick, sorry, I mean process, do you have planned for us today?’

His resistance was beneath the surface. He did not choose to openly question my value to the organization, so I had no opportunity to answer openly. Many people don’t realize how transparent their fears and suspicions can be to those around them.



### My strategy was to meet him where he was.

One of the things that I did was adopt his terminology ‘cheap psychological trick’ and use it to explain every step of the process, the psychological reasoning behind the steps, and what emotions people might experience because of choosing to participate in dialogue. I explained that my job is to ‘manipulate’ the group, but that I intended to do it in as transparent a way as possible, out of deep respect for the wisdom of everyone involved. I even made jokes about learning new methods for self-manipulation. I explained how the managers might want to use several of these ‘cheap psychological tricks’ themselves, but to be sure to always be open and honest about what they are doing and why.

The term ‘cheap psychological trick’ began to take on a new meaning. Ultimately, we would both smile at each other when we used the term. It began to symbolize the successful testing of each other’s intentions and the trust we developed.”

—Simmons, Annette, 2006, p. 24

### References

Simmons, Annette. (2001). The story factor: Inspiration, influence, and persuasion through the art of storytelling. New York: Basic Books.

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