

Human Factor: Similarity & Affinity Biases

We like people the more they are like us. We tend to prefer and trust others with similar backgrounds, points of view, goals, or agendas.

How Do Similarity and Affinity Biases Work?

Similarity Bias is an unconscious preference for those that share any number of traits with us.

There is plentiful research that supports the idea that people are psychologically motivated to see themselves as good. Because of this, we generalize this “good-ness” to others who share those traits with us. Therefore, when we interact with others we deem like ourselves (i.e. fellow college alumnus, Clients like us), we trust them more quickly and feel an automatic affinity towards them.

Because this happens on a subconscious level, we often aren’t aware that our favorable impression of one person over another is affected by these seemingly superficial factors. These biases can influence our value judgments and buying decisions.

Example of Similarity and Affinity Biases in Action:

- We are more likely to give money to people that look like us, and causes we feel connected to personally.
- When advertising for a product, marketers are sure to use actors that represent the target audience.
- In social settings, we tend to self-segregate along different lines, depending on the situation.



“Similarity Bias is why zebras herd with other zebras...and don’t hang out with hyenas.”

-Dan Smaida

Using Similarity & Affinity Biases to Help Clients

- Put the Client’s agenda first! Engage deeply enough – and long enough – to convince Clients their priorities are yours.
- Use referrals, introductions, and permission to name-drop to create high-trust approaches to new Clients.
- Use stories, and examples Clients can relate to – how have you helped investors in their situation succeed?
- Avoid over-advertising your personal wealth – beware of sacrificing relatability for the sake of bragging.
- Avoid typical sales behaviors! Abandon behaviors that remind Clients of the buyer/seller agenda dichotomy.
- Demonstrate you understand Clients’ needs in every meeting and message. Personalize everything.
- Connect clients with each other via seminars and private client events.