

How to Persuade People to Embrace Dark Skies and support GBBIDSR

These are possible suggested techniques when approaching an individual, business, or government entity to advocate for dark skies. This is not an exhaustive or rigid protocol and should be adapted to specific situations.

The over-riding engagement strategy should always be to solicit **voluntary** cooperation emphasizing the benefits to the client as well as to the community, environment, science, etc.

Preparation

Know who the target is. To the extent possible, learn about who you will be talking to.

Are they a property owner or someone using the property such as a renter?

Are they a business owner or simply the manager?

Is it a local business or part of a larger organization?

Are they a government entity? If so, are there requirements to address that entity such as getting on an agenda?

Anticipate potential objections such as the need for security, cost, lack of expertise, or infringement on liberty. Have some points ready for rebuttal.

Bring evidence to support your request such as pamphlets, reports, cost analyses, news articles, testimonials, laws/regulations.

If feasible without trespassing, take photos.

Resolve that you will retain a patient, non-adversarial mindset. See the Resources at the end of this document for guidance on being persuasive.

Initial Contact/Approach

Is a preliminary communication such as phone, email, or a referral needed to set up an appointment? This could facilitate the meeting but could also offer an opportunity for refusal before presenting your case.

If an appointment was arranged, show up on time.

If no appointment, be considerate about when to approach. For example, if the target is a business owner, try to avoid peak times for that business.

If the client is agreeable, a visit after dark could make it easier to explain the need for dark skies.

Do not rule out spontaneous or casual contacts such as encountering someone at the supermarket or place of worship.

At the Meeting

Be sure to sincerely thank the client for agreeing to meet.

After introductions, it would not hurt to establish a relationship by complimenting the client.

Examples:

“Your property looks very nice or you have a great location.”

“Your business provides great service to the community.”

“Your willingness to serve in government is a credit to you.”

Emphasize that we are not trying to prevent anyone from using night lighting. We just want people to use only the light they need and keep it on their property.

State the specific reason for the meeting such as light trespass, sky glow, glare, or clutter. Relate this to the offending source(s) such as unshielded fixtures, poor tilting, fixture location, bulb type and intensity.

Listen to how the client is reacting to the conversation. Allow enough time for him/her to express their thoughts. Look for opportunities to acknowledge the points he or she is raising by re-stating them. This shows that we hear the client.

Do not simply request remediation. Describe solutions. Explain how these solutions could benefit the client as well as dark skies.

Example: The location has an old, unshielded fixture over the front door which is left on all night for security. Show the subject pictures of new, shielded, motion-detector fixtures. Explain that an LED bulb in the new fixture will produce cost savings.

If needed, offer guidance, and help to implement solutions.

Example: If the client is aged or indigent and cannot undertake replacement actions, see if community resources can offer help.

Example: If the client needs technical expertise, offer to put them in touch with resources such as the Observatory, power companies, educational institutions, etc.

If addressing a government entity be prepared to explain how other agencies/jurisdictions accomplished remediation.

Explain the benefits not only to the client, but to the Observatory and the community at large. For example, to facilitate scientific research, enhance the environment, increase tourism.

Follow Up

Attempt to reach an agreement on follow up.

When it will occur.

What is expected to be accomplished by then.

Try to establish a discrete timeline.

Provide contact information so client can ask questions or resolve issues.

Be sure to reiterate a sincere thank you for their attention to this issue.

If Not Willing to Cooperate

If a client is unwilling to cooperate, a possible avenue to pursue is the news media which is always seeking stories involving controversy. Local, regional, and national newspapers, TV and radio stations, and social media outlets could exert pressure particularly for business and government entities. Before engaging the media, it is probably helpful to notify the client beforehand as the mere prospect of negative coverage may be enough to motivate cooperation.

It should be noted that media exposure can also be used to reward cooperation. For example, a business that is not interested in facilitating dark skies may be willing to do so if it results in positive publicity.

As a last resort, various laws exist to protect dark skies. An uncooperative client should be advised the issue will be brought to the attention to the appropriate jurisdiction or law enforcement authority.

Non-profit national or international organizations such as those interested in protecting the environment may be willing to provide assistance.

Resources:

Wiki How [5 Ways to Be Persuasive](#)

Elevate Education [Persuasive Techniques](#)

Australian Academic [Persuasive Language Techniques](#)

Intel [Persuasive Strategies](#)

PERSUASIVE WORDS

IN SUPPORT OF

Accurate
Advantage
Always/Never
Best
Certain
Confident
Convenient
Definitely
Effective
Emphasize
Expect
Interesting
Magnificent
Most
Most Important
Popular
Profitable
Should
Strongly Recommend
Superb
Superior
Tremendous
Truly
Trustworthy
Workable
Worthwhile

IN SUPPORT AGAINST

Aggravate
Agony
Atrocious
Confusing
Cruel
Damaging
Disadvantages
Displeased
Dreadful
Harmful
Harsh
Horrible
Inconsiderate
Inferior
Irritate
Offend
Ordeal
Outrageousness
Provoke
Repulsive
Severe
Shameful
Shocking
Terrible
Unreliable
Unstable

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