

Persuasive Communication for Crucial Conversations

James C Wetherbe (Texas Tech University)

KEYWORDS: How to grow your business, How to start a business, successful startup, Entrepreneurship.

The ability to sell an idea – to colleagues, management, potential investors, and customers – has never been more crucial for business people, especially in a digital world with a loud and bewildering marketplace of ideas.

My book, entitled “So, What’s Your Point?” provides an innovative, structured approach to communication, one that helps individuals navigate conversations or presentations and produce mutually beneficial outcomes for everybody. We are offering it as a free download for EIX and FamilyBusiness.org readers.

In my classrooms and consulting work, communication has always been a top priority. Over the years, I have trained thousands of business students for successful careers -- working for others or themselves – on the core elements of persuasive communications. Of course, in the business world, bosses don’t ask you to take written exams or write term papers. However, you do need to make meaningful, persuasive contributions to business conversations and meetings. You also must make convincing management presentations and write management reports. And if you’re trying to establish a business yourself, you need to be able to convince people quickly that your product or service is worth their attention or investment.

This book helps you accomplish just that. Of the 41 books I have authored or co-authored, it has a unique distinction. When a former student or professional states that one of my books really helped their career, it is always the book below: “So, What’s Your Point?”

Offering it as a free download builds on the mission of our two sites: to help entrepreneurs and innovators of all types and their ventures become more successful. Our founder, Best Buy founder and retired CEO Dick Schulze, is passionate about this mission. That’s why he [funded an entrepreneurship college](https://business.stthomas.edu/schulze-school/about/benefactor/index.html) (https://business.stthomas.edu/schulze-school/about/benefactor/index.html) at The University of St. Thomas (The Schulze School of Entrepreneurship)

with a \$50 million gift in 2000. The very techniques that you will learn in this book helped persuade Dick more than a decade ago to invest in a free, online academic journal that would bring the best thought leadership in entrepreneurship to business owners everywhere.

While Dick is committed to helping entrepreneurs succeed, to get him to invest in EIX I had to clearly argue that an online-only academic journal could achieve this goal better than a traditional print academic journal with a subscription fee. I rolled out my vision of how an editorial board of respected academics, executives and consultants could review and endorse articles quickly; and how the site could translate important but dense scholarly research for a business audience, feature interviews with leading entrepreneurs and case studies, and provide teaching exercises that entrepreneurship professors could use in their classrooms. I also told Dick how the online format would allow us to run articles of any length and not be constrained by a print budget. Besides printed articles we could also use video for interviews. What’s more, I explained how our article ranking system would make it easier for readers to find the articles that resonated the most with their peers.

After hearing these points, Dick agreed to fund EIX through his charitable foundation, [The Richard M. Schulze Family Foundation](https://www.schulzefamilyfoundation.org) (https://www.schulzefamilyfoundation.org) .

But the challenge was only just beginning. We had to convince university leaders to provide a team of professors to help launch the publication, shepherd it through its earliest stages, recruit authors and review the articles. We had our skeptics! Incredible as it seems now, my home university was so against the idea they returned a \$100,000 grant from the foundation to create EIX. In our first year, 2014, we attracted only 20,000 views.

But here we are, a decade after overcoming numerous



challenges (as Dick and I discussed recently [here](https://eiexchange.com/content/dick-schulze-reflects-on-eix-and-familybusinessorgs-decade-of-im) (https://eiexchange.com/content/dick-schulze-reflects-on-eix-and-familybusinessorgs-decade-of-im)). Today, EIX and FamilyBusiness.org are attracting more than **15 million page views**(<https://eiexchange.com/content/eix-family-business-surpass-14-million-annual-page-views>) a year from viewers around the world. [Familybusiness.org](https://familybusiness.org/)(<https://familybusiness.org/>) is now the world's most-visited site dedicated to the management of family firms, and EIX is increasingly recognized as a leading resource for knowledge about entrepreneurship.

It's all the result of persuading Dick Schulze back in 2013 how an innovative academic journal could help him achieve his goal of dramatically improving the success rate of entrepreneurs.

How 'So, What's Your Point?' Could Help You

Do you have an idea that you think is innovative but requires others to fund it and buy it? Then you'll need to make a persuasive argument. This book will help. You'll learn the following skills:

- Understanding and preparing for an audience of one or more
- Grabbing and retaining attention by use of an opening "hook" question and social contract, which is fulfilled via the conversation/presentation
- Skillfully probing throughout conversations and presentations to ensure your audience understands you
- Using a problem/solution format to persuasively present ideas, innovations and courses of action
- Overcoming objections through rephrasing to ensure understanding and, as needed, clarifying and simplifying through use of alternatives and compromise
- Overcoming reservations and doubts through reassurance, and providing substantiating evidence
- Using indirect and direct probing to identify issues of concern that are not being expressed in a forthcoming manner
- Resolving conflict through negotiation and without argument
- Using these communication skills in emails,

texts, memos, letters and management reports

- Using body language that projects openness, reassurance, confidence, acceptance and cooperation
- Reading and responding to body language that projects defensiveness, nervousness, frustration, suspicion, and boredom
- Concluding conversations, presentation and reports through summarizing key points of agreement and finalizing clear courses of action, including desired outcomes, responsibilities and rewards.

Providing this knowledge for free to our readers honors Dick's philanthropic vision, which made EIX and FamilyBusiness.org possible. Please enjoy the book by accessing the PDF below the graphic at the top of this page.

For those faculty interested in incorporating persuasive communication into their coursework please see:

<https://eiexchange.com/content/348-action-exercises-engage-students-more-fully-than>