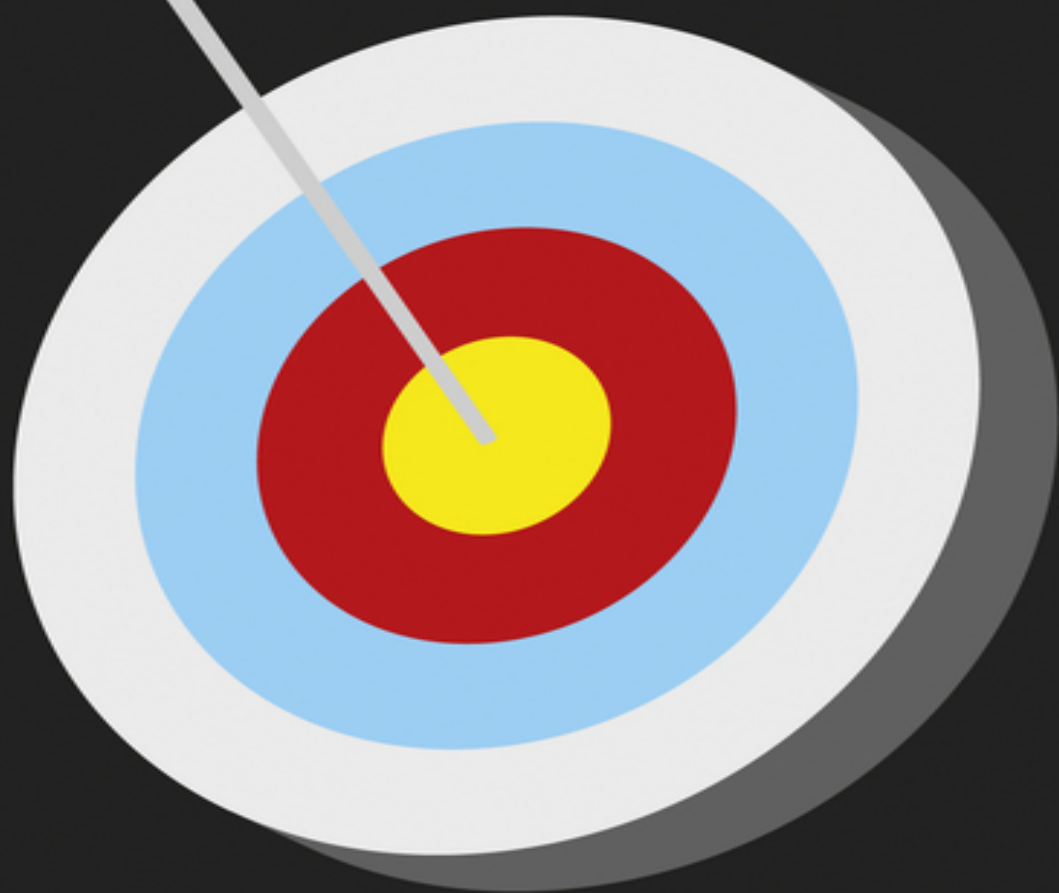


Straight To Yes!

**Asking with Confidence and
Getting What You Want**



Haider Imam

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“This book is challenging, thought provoking, and most of all practical. There are some great techniques, which, if you use them properly, will transform your outcomes, and give you significantly better results, whether in a business or personal context. This stuff just works!”

Robi Bernberg, Chairman, Academy for Chief Executives

“Success is never a one person operation – success always needs cooperation and support. The fastest route to receiving that cooperation and support is to ask for it. Knowing who and when to ask is key. This book clearly demonstrates not just who and when but also why and how. An excellent read.”

**Kevin Gaskell, Entrepreneur, Chairman, Investor.
Previous MD of Porsche GB Ltd and BMW GB Ltd**

“There are areas of everyone’s life in which it would help to be more influential yet information on how to make this happen has not been available in a way that everyone can access. Until now. Haider Imam is a genuinely good communicator who has taken this topic and brought it to life in a way that will be helpful to anyone wanting a greater degree of influence in some aspect of their life. This book combines content to provide the ‘what’ and ‘why’ and tools so that it is easy to understand the how. The authoritative sections on the brain are intriguing and fascinating and the tools are designed to inspire action.”

Professor Patricia Riddell, Professor of Applied Neuroscience, Head of Department of Psychology, University of Reading

“A compelling read and with many insightful and practical suggestions to help you excel in your personal and business lives.”

Sir Peter Vardy DL, Chairman, Vardy Group of Companies

“You can have everything in life you want if you’ll just help enough other people get what they want.”

Zig Ziglar

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Dedicated to

Marie-Claire, La'ali and Omar – my beloved and inspirational tribe.

And to the thinkers of great thoughts: the world's greatest idea, without someone saying, "Yes!" to it, is as nothing. I sincerely hope this book unlocks possibilities, recognition and reward for you.

Introduction: Why Getting “Straight to Yes!” Is So Relevant Today

There's an age-old Geordie saying from more austere times, which goes something like, “Shy bairns get nae broth,” meaning “shy children don't get any soup.” And it's becoming truer in modern life. We live in an age of unparalleled competition for resources. At the time of writing there are seven people competing for every one university degree place in the UK. There is record unemployment in many parts of Europe, leading to intense competition to hold onto jobs or secure promotions. More than 40,000,000 people are using online dating in the US, all competing for the same hearts. Across the world, famous brand name businesses have closed down their doors because of recession and insufficient sales to turn them around. Undeniably, these are challenging times.

So, congratulations! What you're in possession of and reading right now is undeniably an exciting and enticing prospect: the ability to fine-tune your game to make a measurable and noticeable impact with your target audience. The content contained within has been proven effective in multiple business models across multiple industries, cultures and continents. However, before we get into the main flow of the book, I'd like to offer some personalized thoughts for you on why this collection of short, simple, practical techniques is so relevant to you.

An Evolving Business Paradigm

Business leaders around the globe are struggling to cope with the break-neck pace of change in their markets and consumer buying patterns. Micro-financing, neuromarketing and social networking are just three examples of how our world is becoming more opportunistic, sophisticated and connected. Perhaps most challenging of all is the demise of authority as a main source of influence. Since the swinging '60s, attitudes to “authority figures” have been evolving rapidly. Now the ageing baby boomers that masterminded this shift are tasting the fruits of their labour courtesy of *Generation Y* (also known as *the Millennials*). Gen Y, as a generalization, attributes far less clout to rank and file than previous generations: it's a generation that wants to be enfranchised, included in the planning and wooed to join in. It likes autonomy and flat organizations. It likes Twitter and Facebook. It dislikes hierarchy and red tape. Its preference is to deliver change *through* people not *to* people.

Add to Gen Y the reality of a global labour market: a modern leader of a multinational corporation may contend with offices across the world and a call centre in Mumbai with contrasting cultural attitudes, but even the leaders of a small business may have a dozen different nationalities and cultures working in their very own office. Using the same old management, leadership and influence approaches from yesteryear with this new workforce demographic is a recipe for disaster. If we abuse them, we lose them, which will damage our results and our reputation. The fact is that in today's marketplace, job loyalty is rare. Many executives I know keep their details on job hunt sites or headhunters' lists because they're always looking for that next step up the career ladder. The crumbling paradigm of a “job for life”

is rapidly being replaced by multiple careers, micro-businesses, joint ventures and an entrepreneurial revolution. Even some of the major organizations my company works with engage us specifically to help their leaders become more entrepreneurial. Losing good people is exactly what you don't need when you feel you're constantly under scrutiny, while attempting to deliver more with fewer resources.

An Increasing Need to Create Buy-In

As people in business, we're having to retain or attract increasingly switched-on customers, who've already researched five alternative options (with crowd-sourced reviews) on their mobile phones before our meeting. Because the purchase options are more numerous, more similar and often more confusing, gaining instant commitment to move our way has become noticeably less straightforward. Since the customer increasingly expects a degree of personalization and flexibility from us, we now have to negotiate and persuade *internally* more than ever – to get that discount, to make that exception, to add a new feature, to work as part of a supplier coalition ...

As executives, project leaders or managers, we're often working in ever-flatter organizations, matrix teams or task forces where no single member of the group has more appointed authority than any other member. Often, each of us has what we see as the best idea in the meeting and our ego is bruised if others don't agree. We fight internal politics, cliques and silo thinking. We are obsessed with creating "buy-in" for our ideas, so that our ideas stick and bear fruit. It's certainly not easy. Added to that, we're ambitious. We want to do a great job and be seen to be

doing so, in order to move up through the organization. We want to influence our bosses to buy into our ideas, to rate us more highly at review time, to give us a bigger salary increase.

But the greatest idea or most noble intent, championed by the poorest persuader will forever remain unheard.

A Fight for Resources

At the best of times, we have to work hard to gain sponsorship for our cause, be that in the form of time, money, public support or otherwise. Now, in an age of cutbacks, reductions in real earnings and record low disposable income, our organizations bravely face even more of a challenge: to persuade people in the toughest of times to spend or donate generously, with fewer resources to get in front of them.

A Challenge Closer to Home

As a child of the '70s, I grew up in an age of being present. I'd play with friends or by myself with twigs, ropes, cap guns and Lego; we'd spend an entire day riding our bikes around the countryside wearing our jackets as capes and our mudguards folded under to sound like a motorbike. We had computers, but played them infrequently. We had no Internet, no mobile phones. If anyone wanted to reach us, including our parents, they'd have to leave a message with someone and wait until we received it.

Nowadays our children are constantly "on," or at least want to be. If we're not vigilant, they'll watch TV while listening to music and researching their homework on a

notebook, connected to a school virtual learning environment and interacting with friends via Facebook and Twitter. In some ways, they're more confident, more exposed to the world, more clued up. They study work in primary school that we studied in high school. They live, grow and think at a rate far faster than we did. We have fewer extended families in touch with each other and elders, the bedrock of society, don't have the same relevance: they were of use when life was predictable and came in cycles. From the perspective of many of our children, the rate of change nowadays weakens authority figures' credibility.

But they're still kids and they still need direction. Which is difficult when they're 13 years old and taller than us, thinking that we don't understand the way the world works nowadays. The more we direct and instruct, the more opposition we create.

Time: The New Currency

Arguably, there's something even more important than a shifting attitude to authority, flatter organizations and increased competition for resources – time. Studies show we are working longer hours, spending less time at home and even walking 10% faster than a decade ago. The amount of interactions we have on a weekly basis has increased exponentially, often meaning we have less time with each person to get something done. Isn't the ability to consistently get *straight to yes* with more people, bypassing long, drawn-out conversations but in a way that also promotes healthy relationships, something that we all need?

Contained within this book is a collection of the fastest ways to yes known to man. Simple methods that will boost your results *and* your relationships, enlist, persuade and motivate your audience – all designed for a new age of influence.

In Summary

Perhaps it's fair to say that modern-day possibilities match modern-day problems. It's the age of the entrepreneur. But entrepreneurship is not what we're taught at school. There are very few classes I know of that teach our children business thinking, pitching for funding, marketing, sales, consumer psychology or leadership. Certain schools offer enterprise schemes for selected children to give them some of this experience; some schools have connections with industry but, in reality, the numbers are negligible.

The bottom line is that we emerge into a new world, lacking the basic skills that we'll need during the course of our natural working life. Uplifting, eh?

So, you have some choices here. You can:

- 1.** Write a letter to your old head teacher or principal, explaining in detail how they failed to prepare you for the "Information and Persuasion Age."
- 2.** Write a letter to your children's head teacher or principal, asking why these skills are not in their curriculum or extra-curricular activities.
- 3.** Realize that teachers are angels, working in a system that mandates what and how they teach and are doing the best job they can with limited resources in a world that's changing so fast that no one really knows what to expect in five years' time, let alone 15, meaning that it's time for you to take action yourself.

If your choice included option 3, this book may serve you well.

I was working for a leading building society when my marriage broke up. It was agreed that my departing husband would sign the property over to me together with his debts. However, my salary at the time clearly wouldn't cover the repayments let alone leave me with enough to live on. I had to find an additional source of income *and I had to make my employers believe it benefitted them* to let me take the mortgage on my own. But at the time the company had a policy of not permitting staff to "double job."

Once I had a plan to cover my costs I went to my line manager, who said she couldn't help and referred me to the branch manager. The branch manager said it was out of the question, so I asked to be referred to the regional manager to outline my plan, who after meeting with me agreed to recommend my case to Head Office and, with certain provisos, they agreed!

I got a huge amount of job satisfaction for the next few years. I worked with the branch team consistently achieving best results in both the region and the county league tables, never took a day off sick and never went into arrears with my mortgage payments. I paid off my debts and vastly reduced the outstanding mortgage, which later gave me and my new partner the opportunity to buy our dream home.

Within ten years of buying the property, we'd paid off our mortgage completely. All because I asked.

By Margaret Ginnelly, 50-something graduate of the University of Life, currently volunteering and supporting her partner's business www.needonesoon.com

Suggestions on How Best to Use This Book

Learning should always be an enjoyable thing! One thing we know from neuroscientific research is that learning is dependent on the emotional state you're in while you're learning it.

So, to quote a mentor of mine, if you want to feel stressed when putting the learning into practice, feel stressed while learning it! If you want to feel playful, confident and