

Engage people's interest,
passion and commitment!



BE YOUR
BEST

GET HEARD GET RESULTS

**How to Get Buy-In for
Your Ideas and Initiatives**

SIMON DOWLING

WILEY

**GET
HEARD
GET
RESULTS**



BE YOUR
BEST

GET HEARD GET RESULTS

**How to Get Buy-In for
Your Ideas and Initiatives**

SIMON DOWLING

WILEY

First published as *Work with me* in 2016 by John Wiley & Sons Australia, Ltd
42 McDougall St, Milton Qld 4064

Office also in Melbourne

This edition first published in 2020 by John Wiley & Sons Australia, Ltd

Typeset in 12.5/14.5pt Arno Pro

© 2engage Pty Ltd 2016

The moral rights of the author have been asserted

ISBN: 978-0-730-38201-0



A catalogue record for this
book is available from the
National Library of Australia

All rights reserved. Except as permitted under the *Australian Copyright Act 1968* (for example, a fair dealing for the purposes of study, research, criticism or review), no part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, communicated or transmitted in any form or by any means without prior written permission. All inquiries should be made to the publisher at the address above.

Cover design by Wiley

Internal artwork by Linden Duck

Printed in Singapore by Markono Print Media Pte Ltd

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Disclaimer

The material in this publication is of the nature of general comment only, and does not represent professional advice. It is not intended to provide specific guidance for particular circumstances and it should not be relied on as the basis for any decision to take action or not take action on any matter which it covers. Readers should obtain professional advice where appropriate, before making any such decision. To the maximum extent permitted by law, the author and publisher disclaim all responsibility and liability to any person, arising directly or indirectly from any person taking or not taking action based on the information in this publication.

Contents

<i>About the author</i>	<i>vii</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>ix</i>
<i>Foreword by Sheila Heen</i>	<i>xi</i>
<i>Prologue</i>	<i>xiii</i>
Part I: Get Ready	1
1 SHIFT: Choose the power of buy-in	3
2 MINDSET: Imagine what's possible	15
3 CONVICTION: Establish a 'Big So What'	31
4 WHO: Think wide, act narrow	43
5 TIMING: Read the conditions, ride the wave	59
6 YOU: Be someone they'll listen to	69
Part II: Go	93
7 MOOD: Make them <i>feel</i> it	95
8 MIND: Give them a reason	117
9 MOVEMENT: Convert to sustained action	139
<i>Roadmap for buy-in</i>	<i>161</i>
<i>Where to now?</i>	<i>165</i>
<i>Epilogue</i>	<i>169</i>
<i>Notes</i>	<i>171</i>

About the author

Simon Dowling is a leading thinker on creating teams and workplaces that thrive on collaboration.

His passion for team dynamics started when he led a double life: during the day he was a commercial lawyer in a big city firm and at night he was a performer in improvised comedy shows, including the hit TV show *Thank God You're Here*. The contrast between these two worlds was what spurred him to go it alone in his own practice so he could help others pair the technical skills of negotiating agreement with a sense of play, engagement and, most importantly, action!

Based in Melbourne, Australia, Simon now works with senior leaders and their teams as a mentor and coach, and is a highly sought-after conference speaker. His clients are like a variety show bag, ranging from funky start-ups and tech companies to banks, government agencies, educational institutions and elite sporting clubs.

Simon continues to admire the way a great improvisation company can come together and create compelling scenes and stories for its audiences without a hint of a script — the essence of true collaboration.

When not working with people or presenting at conferences, Simon can be found hanging out at one of Melbourne's many cafés and coffee hotspots, or at the beach with his family, assessing the surf conditions (waiting for the perfect wave, of course).

simondowling.com.au

Acknowledgements

Writing this book has been an incredible privilege. In truth, it couldn't have happened without the support of a whole army of wonderful people. I'd like to take a moment to thank them.

I start with my amazing wife, Amanda. Amanda's the one who gave me her buy-in (at so many levels) and who held the fort while I bunkered down to write. She's been my number one cheer squad throughout the project, and I will always be hers. Our two amazing kids — Sophie and Samuel — were so patient as Dad spent most of the summer holidays obsessing with his book, even when the beach seemed like a much better idea. Thanks guys, I love you heaps.

Thank you to all my family and friends. Aside from all those supportive 'how's your book going?' conversations, you might be surprised how often I've pictured you as I rewrote a vexing paragraph or sentence. Having you in my mind helped me to say what I wanted to say.

A huge thanks to those who challenged me to write this in the first place, and pushed me to — and then through — a place of doubt and discomfort. Matt Church, Peter Cook and Lynne Cazaly were all instrumental in helping me to just write

the freakin' thing. Thanks also to David Simpson, who helped me keep a detached calmness as I entered the fray.

I also want to acknowledge those who played an important role in shaping my thinking on the topic of this book, even though it was many years ago now. Thank you to Eliezer Kornhauser, Jonny Schauder, Sandy Caspi Sable and Shawn Whelan for the many hours of debate and discussion.

Finally, I've been blessed to have an amazing team of people working with me on this project: Kelly Irving, my editor extraordinaire; Linden Duck for his cool sketches; Nicole Bailey and Amy Rockman for their incredible support at HQ; the guys at Glovers Station who ensured my coffee cup runneth over; and of course the dedicated team at Wiley — Lucy Raymond, Chris Shorten, Jem Bates, Ingrid Bond, Theo Vassili and all those behind the scenes. To you all I say, thank you!

Foreword

You get really good at what you do. Your skills and background knowledge and experience make your work valuable. Your input sought. You hit your stride.

Then you get promoted to ‘leadership.’ Suddenly you’re not in control of everything anymore. You’re overwhelmed. You try to do as much as you can yourself. But now you’re the bottleneck. You delegate to others and try to ‘mentor’ them and you are accused of micro-managing. You try leaving them alone, and they complain you need to show more leadership. To top it all off, you get put in charge of a change effort and six months in, nobody’s changing.

It’s a paradox at the heart of leadership, of negotiation, of getting things done: sometimes getting traction requires treading more lightly. We have to let go of *getting* people on board, and instead invite them aboard.

Simon offers us the essential ingredients — mindsets and skills for how to invite people on board, whether it’s your spouse, your kids, your colleagues or your clients. In clear, engaging terms he points out the assumptions that can get us stuck, the common mistakes we all make, and a handful of practical techniques for engaging others’ interest, passion, and commitment.

He had me on board from the first page. And long after the last page he has me using his advice. That's the highest compliment I can give a book.

Sheila Heen

Co-author of *Thanks for the Feedback* and *Difficult
Conversations*
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Prologue

Go to the people. Live with them. Learn from them. Love them. Start with what they know. Build with what they have. But with the best leaders, when the work is done, the task accomplished, the people will say 'We have done this ourselves.'

Lao Tzu, the founder of Taoism

Imagine if each of your ideas, initiatives or projects was a book on a shelf in a bookstore. Would anyone pick it up? Would they fork out the cash to purchase a copy? Would they even read it? More importantly would they act on the things they'd learned there? Would they take it back to their teams, colleagues and friends, and start a conversation about it? Would they put it on their own bookshelf or post selfies on Instagram of them reading it? Would they buy extra copies to give to their friends? Would people bang on your door, asking to work with you on writing the sequel?

We've all got ideas we want others to buy into.

Whether it's a new initiative, a project or even a way of life, we want people to jump on board and support us wholeheartedly and see our idea through to fruition. We need other people's

cooperation, their commitment and their energy. We need them to smile, jump in and ask, ‘Where do I sign up?’ This infectious enthusiasm and dedication to see the job through to the end is exactly what we need to effect change.

This is a book about building cooperation and buy-in. Buy-in is the thing that makes and drives highly engaged, creative and motivated teams. As you’ve no doubt experienced before, without buy-in, projects and ideas falter or fail to even get off the ground. Without buy-in, your ideas will come crashing down around you. Exorbitant costs, wasted money, squandered time and resources are all dangerous consequences of the inability to build buy-in effectively. Without buy-in, managers are forced to crack whips or find ever juicier carrots to dangle in front of their team to get them to take action.

So how do you get others to buy into your ideas — to work with you?

Over the past couple of decades, I’ve had the good fortune to work with people from a wide variety of backgrounds — entrepreneurs, senior executives, charity workers, tech geeks, elite sporting teams, government officials, lawyers, health professionals and salespeople. One thing that’s clear to me is that although everyone’s situation, ideas and context will differ, the challenge of building buy-in is not a technical one; it’s a human one. *How do I connect with this person? How do I help them to see things differently? How can I make sense of their concerns? How do I foster a sense of trust? What can I do to convince them to take action?*

Answering these kinds of questions comes more naturally to some people than to others. After all, each of us has been forging our own approach since we first tried to convince the other kids in the schoolyard to trade football cards with us.

What many of us *don't* get is an opportunity to formally learn the skills required to build cooperation and buy-in. Skills such as influencing, negotiating, persuading, collaborating and problem solving. As we build up our pool of technical knowledge — in whatever domain that may be — there is a presumption that we've got the rest covered. But that ain't necessarily so. These are skills that need to be learned.

This book will show you how to get heard and get results, not through coercion or manipulation, but through the gentle art of buy-in. It will equip you with the skills to:

- » become a true catalyst of change
- » foster the mindset of a champion of buy-in
- » build relationships of trust that will underpin your quest for buy-in
- » set the mood and create an emotional ***bias to yes*** in your target audience
- » overcome objections and resistance
- » build genuine agreement and commitment
- » convert buy-in into meaningful long-term change.

I'm a practical guy, so this book has lots of practical ideas and exercises at the end of each chapter so you can stop and apply what you're learning in the real world.

Each chapter builds on the ones before it, so I recommend you work your way through them in sequence. My hope is that you return to chapters that interest you or, when you're stuck, for inspiration and help at any point on the buy-in journey.

I wrote this book because I'm a big believer in what can be achieved when you spark the energy of others. It's in this way that I hope to spark yours. By the time you reach the end of the book, you should feel a renewed sense of confidence and

the courage to be a true champion of buy-in. To be someone who takes their power not from their position or authority, but from their ability to engage others and generate true, authentic buy-in. If you ask me, we need more people like that in the world.

So what do you say — *are you in?*

Part I

Get Ready

The path to buy-in begins well before you sit down at the proverbial table and pitch your idea. First, there's important work to be done: both on yourself, and on understanding the bigger picture. Before we can 'Go!', we need to 'Get Ready'.

Abraham Lincoln once famously stated, 'Give me six hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe.'

Let's get sharpening ...Chapter 1