



PEOPLE-CENTRIC SKILLS

INTERPERSONAL AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS
FOR FINANCIAL PROFESSIONALS

DANNY M. GOLDBERG

Foreword by **RICHARD CHAMBERS**

SECOND EDITION

WILEY

People-Centric Skills

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People-Centric Skills

*Interpersonal and
Communication Skills for
Financial Professionals*

Second Edition

DANNY M. GOLDBERG

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*To my kids, Caleb and Liora, who continue to inspire
and amaze me and are becoming great communicators
in their own right.*

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Foreword

VER THE COURSE of my 40-plus years in the internal auditing profession, I've had the privilege of meeting thousands of practitioners from around the world whose personalities are as varied and fascinating as their cultures. My experiences provide ample evidence to dispel an unfair and lingering stereotype that internal auditors are, well, dull.

Another typecast paints all internal auditors as shy and awkward introverts. I must admit (sheepishly) that one of my favorite jokes about internal auditing plays on this stereotype:

Q: Did you hear about the extroverted internal auditor?

A: He looks at your shoes when he talks to you.

But this, too, is an unfair and inaccurate portrayal. So why does it persist?

Part of the answer lies in the kind of work we do and how we do it. The only interaction many people have with internal auditors is fraught with concern.

Oh no! Why is our department being audited? What is internal audit looking for? Why are they poking around my records? Did I do something wrong?

With such tension as a backdrop to the internal auditor walking in the door, first impressions with our engagement clients go a long way toward establishing how they perceive our profession. If a team of auditors comes in the door with a no-nonsense and standoffish attitude, demanding records and pontificating about independence and objectivity, the lasting impression will not be a positive one. This is why building our soft skills—those skills that help us connect on a personal level—is critical to our success.

People-Centric Skills: Interpersonal and Communication Skills for Financial Professionals, 2nd edition, goes a long way toward getting us there.

I have known Danny M. Goldberg for many years. He has dedicated much of his career to championing our profession and helping practitioners build critical soft skills. For more than two decades, Danny has built and led internal

audit functions. He is a well-known author in the profession and has published numerous articles in trade magazines over the years.

In this revised edition, Danny picks up where his 2014 book of the same name left off. He provides clever anecdotal teaching moments through his lead character, Dalton Zimmer, that focus on how auditors can approach different situations and scenarios. From interview techniques and reading body language to understanding the art of listening, the book covers important soft-skill topics, including self-awareness and empathy, emotional intelligence, and influencing change. His new book also provides an important update about communicating with two generations whose influence is growing quickly in business—Generation X and Millennials.

As a consistently eloquent voice promoting the value of effective communication, Danny reminds us that we must connect with people. That is why his first book resonated so well, and I'm certain that version 2.0 will, as well.

Richard F. Chambers, CIA, QIAL, CGAP, CCSA, CRMA
President and CEO
The Institute of Internal Auditors

Preface

PEOPLE-CENTRIC SKILLS: *Interpersonal and Communication Skills for Financial Professionals*, 2nd edition, is the follow-up to the 2014 critically acclaimed first edition. This first edition has been as rated as one of the top 30 interpersonal communication books of all time (bookauthority.org). The second edition aims to dive deeper into the critical skills necessary to be successful in the corporate world. Study after study supports the premise that soft skills are as important—or even more so—than experience or qualifications:

- According to a new survey of more than 2,000 adults conducted online by the Harris Poll, having soft skills—such as personal, communications, and time-management skills; enthusiasm; dependability; and reliability—without the required experience seems to be more desirable than having the right experience or qualifications for a job but lacking soft skills.¹
- A 2018 study examined the views of hundreds of recent graduates from the **CEMS** Master in International Management program and over half (56%) consider either social skills (33%) or the ability to manage people (23%) as the most important skills to develop as technology increases in the corporate workplace. They rated these soft skills higher than teachable hard skills (7%), technical job-specific content skills (7%), or process skills such as critical thinking (12%).²
- LinkedIn's 2018 Workforce Report highlights a significant mismatch between the skill sets of today's top talent and the skill sets companies are seeking that LinkedIn CEO Jeff Weiner calls a significant skills gap.

¹ <https://hrxexecutive.com/are-soft-skills-more-important-than-the-right-qualifications/>

² <https://www.fenews.co.uk/featured-article/17062-are-soft-skills-more-important-than-education>

“Somewhat surprisingly,” Weiner says in an interview with CNBC, “interpersonal skills is where we’re seeing the biggest imbalance. Communications is the number one skills gap.”³

This is the easy-to-read story of a dynamic executive coach and trainer and the numerous clients he serves. Time and time again, our main character, Dalton Zimmer, is thrust into situations that emphasize the importance of People-Centric Skills. The book carries forward many of the skills highlighted in the first edition and continues to demonstrate the impact that interpersonal and communication skills—whether good or bad—have on a person’s effectiveness, personal relationships, job, and career. Readers will be able to empathize with the characters and real-life situations highlighted in the book.

Topics include:

- Body Language
- Neurolinguistic Programming
- Gesture Clusters
- Facial Expressions
- STARS Method for Thinking on Your Feet
- Responding to Difficult Questions
- Reading Verbal Tone
- Emotional Intelligence
- Employee Motivation
- Self-Reflection
- Self-Awareness
- Emotional Intelligence
- Mode of Communication
- Change Management
- Transparent Communication
- Continuous Communication
- Public Speaking
- Voice Inflection

Our story takes us through the trials and tribulations of Dalton Zimmer, a well-known speaker and executive coach. Readers are led through many different challenging scenarios that test Dalton’s resilience and character. Dalton

³ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/nazbeheshti/2018/09/24/are-hard-skills-or-soft-skills-more-important-to-be-an-effective-leader/#5e1f9a512eb3>

balances his client demands with operating his business and attempting to be a good father to two kids, Caleb (12) and Liora (11). Some of the scenarios and topics covered in the forthcoming narrative include:

- **Chapter 1: The People-Centric Journey Begins Anew:** This chapter re-establishes our characters and sets up our storylines for the duration of the novel.
- **Chapter 2: Reading Through People:** Dalton arrives at his client (Sojo Technologies) in San Francisco to assist the CFO in interviewing a suspected harasser and fraudster, Julianne Cranson. Julianne is a high-level sales executive who has always been one of the company's top producers but is suspected of numerous violations, including kickbacks, undocumented discounts to customers, fraudulent reporting of travel expense, and threatening employees. Dalton advises and assists Kelli Jackson on how to approach Julianne and how to read her. Dalton has also coached Kelli on presenting to the audit committee and board and is planning a return visit for hands-on instruction for her team.
- **Chapter 3: Emotional Intelligence:** Dalton drives into San Jose to meet with Stanton Electronics Chief Financial Officer Brad Lester, a long-term friend and client. Dalton has his kids fly up and spend the weekend with Brad and his kids. Dalton takes in Dax's (Brad's eight-year old) soccer game, where Brad is an outspoken fan and parent. Brad is very demanding and vocal. After the game, Dalton and Brad talk about his impact on his son and how, in certain situations, Brad is intimidating without realizing it. The conversation dovetails into the importance of empathy and how to use it effectively to build relationships and relate to people.
- **Chapter 4: Different Points of View: Using Self-Awareness and Empathy Effectively:** The next day, after Dalton's deep-dive conversation with Brad on emotional intelligence and how to apply it in the workplace and at home, Brad applies these key learnings in an important conversation with his son, Dax.
- **Chapter 5: Wrong Mode = Wrong Mood: Determining the Optimal Mode of Communication:** Dalton's ex-wife is Caleb's newly appointed soccer team manager and wants to make sure the communication issues that the team has suffered from in the past do not continue to occur. Over dinner, Leslie and Dalton discuss some situations that have occurred and how they should have been communicated.
- **Chapter 6: Influencing Change Throughout Any Business:** Dalton delivers one of his signature courses on how to look for deficiencies

and continually improve any business process. Dalton starts the presentation with the importance of communication throughout any organization, highlighting the foundational keys to a successful corporate culture transparent, continuous communication.

- **Chapter 7: Projecting the Real You: Public Speaking:** Dalton meets another visit to the Bay Area to see Kelli and her team and discuss presentation skills and leading practices on how to deliver a compelling message.
- **Chapter 8: Coaching and Mentoring:** Dalton meets with Austin, head of Information Technology at Sojo Technologies, to determine the right path and approach to deliver feedback to one of his directors, David Allison. Austin is struggling with David because he was recently promoted to vice president, a role David believes should have been his.
- **Chapter 9: Presentation Skills and Body Language:** Dalton reviews the videos completed by Kelli's team and delivers feedback to the team on presentation skills and body language and other topics that assist in delivering a top-notch presentation.
- **Chapter 10: Thinking Quickly on Your Feet:** Dalton discusses leading practices in listening techniques and how to recall a person's name. He also discusses how the senior team might handle people who display aggressive techniques. He introduces the STARS method for thinking quickly on your feet, and how anyone can use it effectively.
- **Chapter 11: Coaching and Mentoring, Revisited:** Dalton previously coached Austin and assists him in delivering feedback to David Allison, a direct report he has struggled with since Austin's promotion to vice president. Dalton helps Austin deliver delicate feedback to make sure he and David are aligned moving forward.
- **Chapter 12: Crisis Management:** Prior to catching a flight, Dalton discusses the pros and cons of various ways to handle crisis management with Sojo CEO Brandon and CFO Kelli.
- **Epilogue:** We wrap up some of our storylines and find out what happens to Dalton, Lauren, Julianne, and others.

Acknowledgments

WANT TO THANK Tali Ploetz for her contributions to this book. With her vast experience in audit and risk, Tali wrote Chapter 2, which was critical to setting up our storylines.

I also want to thank the many people I have met throughout the years that have unknowingly inspired the stories in this book. Without you, the stories would only be fictional tales.

People-Centric Skills

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CHAPTER ONE

The People-Centric Journey Begins Anew

INTRODUCTION

Dalton finally settles into his seat on American Airlines flight 330, now delayed for three hours due to . . . who knows what the excuse is today. As a too-frequent traveler (and someone who loves control), he has given up on attempting to comprehend many things he cannot control. Happy to get an upgraded seat, he prepares for takeoff by gulping down a Tito's and soda, not taking the time to savor the flavor (or lack thereof). Regardless of the fact that he travels close to 200,000 miles a year, he never seems to get used to being on a plane—and out of a position of control. He very rarely sleeps in transit, so he plans to use his plane time wisely and goes through his running (and never-ending) task list.

At times, Dalton has overextended himself, even if he controls his own schedule. He fights a constant battle between having quality time and earning the money that enables him to have quality time. Tonight, he is heading from Sacramento to Orlando, but due to delays, he is routing through Miami and not directly to Walt Disney World. Instead of landing at the originally scheduled time of 5:00 am, this gets him in at 10:30 am—definitely a challenge to speaking coherently to an audience of 450 risk professionals at 1:00 pm. He has always viewed problems like these as self-imposed challenges and had fun with the circumstances.

One of the reasons Dalton took on this ambitious schedule is that it will give him the opportunity to meet his kids, Caleb and Liora, in Orlando and take them on a late summer trip to Disney World. The kids flew in with his ex; after a few years of getting a feel for their after-marriage relationship, he and his ex have achieved a very good rapport. In fact, it is reminiscent of the relationship he fell in love with. Revisionist historian—no regrets. Move forward.

Both Caleb and Liora have been accepted into a great middle school after suffering from constant bullying over the previous year. Fingers crossed, but everyone agrees this is the place both can thrive. This trip is a reward for all they have been through over the previous year.

Loving his job/company/profession Is key to Dalton's continued self-motivation. Keeping clients happy, making a difference, giving other like-minded individuals opportunities to be successful—this is what he lives for! Regardless of not sleeping for 32 hours, he knows that when it is his time to own the stage, he will always be successful, but maybe the time has come to avoid these kinds of scenarios! Over the past five years, Dalton's business has grown exponentially. His biggest hurdle—leveraging a business dependent upon one person/one personality—has been overcome by finding like-minded people and on selling clients not on a replacement for Dalton but on a different approach. All the other life coaches/trainers working with Dalton bring exceptional diversity in background and experience to the table. It works, but finding like-minded people was not a simple task.

This in-flight evening was slated to be full of administrative tasks: proposals, billing, client follow-up, and brainstorming strategies for client issues and potential go-to market strategies for some new initiatives. After takeoff (and turning on *Avengers: Endgame*), Dalton pops out his new rose gold tinted MacBook Air. Everything tech-related that Dalton owns is Apple and rose gold; he enjoys the general theme without explicitly stating that everything his team does turns to gold.

Dalton needs the noise of the movie streaming through his wireless headphones to help him block out distractions and focus more. After handling some of the mindless administrative tasks, Dalton turns to his detailed task list and begins to project-plan his approach to his new and continuing client engagements:

- For a new client in San Francisco, SoJo Technologies, Dalton has been called in by the chief financial officer, Kelli Jackson, to assist in interviewing a suspected fraudster, Julianne Cranson. Julianne is a high-level sales executive who has always been one of the company's top producers but is