# What's Your Point?

Cut The Crap, Hit The Mark & Stick!

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PJ Wade "The Catalyst"

Catapult Publishing www.CatapultPublishing.com

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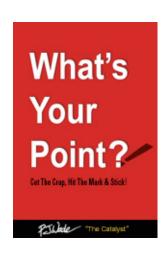
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# What's Your Point? Cut The Crap, Hit The Mark & Stick! by

PJ Wade "The Catalyst"

Have your communication skills improved as dramatically as **The Leap from Quill Pen to Smartphone** would lead you to believe?

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Introduction

#### What's My Point?

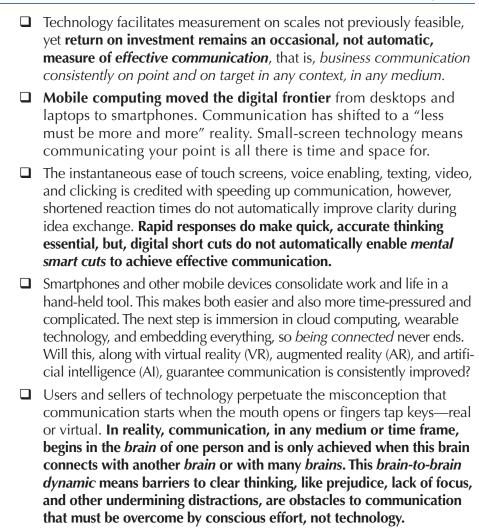
Onward & Upward—the directions that really matter! — PJ Wade

#### What "Point" Is It Anyway?

The 21st Century is well underway, but we've dragged along too much penand-paper-style thinking from the 20th Century. Since a lot of that century's thinking had its foundation in the quill-pen 19th Century, we have not achieved as much progress with communication effectiveness in the 21st Century as we could have—nor as much as we think we have:

ild have—nor as much as we think we have:	
	Computers essentially remain the "garbage in, garbage out" technology they were when first invented.
	Mobile phones allow us to reach almost anyone and anywhere on the planet within seconds, but too often we talk too much, say too little, and become distracted by interruptions, shortened attention spans, and applications.
	The internet and the web are much more sophisticated creative communication tools than the pen or the typewriter in so many ways, but users still require the same, if not greater, communication skills and powers of observation to make their point and to connect with their desired audience or market— <i>The Target</i> .
	Social networking has returned <i>individuality</i> and <i>conversation</i> to the spotlight, but clear, relevant expression of thought remains essential to reduce frustration, misunderstanding, and wasted time since, too

- to reduce frustration, misunderstanding, and wasted time since, too often, the message is lost in the medium through lack of personal clarity and communication skill.
- □ Social media is here to stay, and this is just the beginning. Social media facilitates social networking to embody what communication is all about—good, bad, and indifferent:
  - 1. Success with social media and networking arises from *effective communication,* which is amplified by the intensity, intimacy, and immediacy of our new expressive world;
  - 2. Problems and challenges with social media and networking arise from *miscommunication*, which is amplified by the intensity, intimacy, and immediacy of our new expressive world.



What's Your Point? is a whisper in the ear, a tap on the shoulder, a pat on the back, and a mental kick in the pants for those with years of hands-on experience thinking, analyzing, creating, improvising, and deciding for others—their clients. No dummies here, but there is Room for Improvement.

Experience—mine and that of others—continues to prove communication lies at the heart of most, if not all, problems and at the foundation of all solutions.

The professional knowledge, wisdom, creativity, and decisiveness generated by experience are often the driving force behind improvement and innovation. Ironically, past experience can also forestall these two essentials, particularly in times of dramatic economic or social shifts.

Bad habits, bias, and mediocrity can creep in to erode communication effectiveness after only a short time on the job. Repetition entrenches these flaws. Add to this erosion, the commonly-overlooked need to purge and merge influences from past technologies and different centuries. As a result, *The Point* behind too much of what is said, written, texted, posted, shared...and done is lost in the process. How do you know you aren't missing The 21st-Century Point that really matters to your target prospects and clients?

What's Your Point? emphasizes and demonstrates that business success in the future—next cell call, next text, next email, next tweet, next conversation, next meeting, next day, next week, next year—is your choice. This practical business-achievement book is a fresh, forward-thinking resource designed to help you reinforce communication strengths and advantages—online and off—and consistently make excellent strategic choices for clients and your business whatever happens.

#### What's "The Point" When Communicating?

Communication starts in the brain and so does miscommunication. Problems making your point or understanding someone else's are the result of unclear or misguided brain-to-brain expression with others and with ourselves. Missed opportunities and other failings in business can usually be traced to poor communication or the complete lack of it.

The Point is to avoid common, long-standing communication mistakes that professionals, entrepreneurs, executives, coaches, and advisors often repeat while intent on successfully making their 21st-Century point with prospects, clients, stakeholders, and themselves—online and off.

What's Your Point? clarifies how and why the responsibility for communication rests with professionals, executives, coaches, advisors, and entrepreneurs. They may all work diligently to improve skills and knowledge relevant to their profession and industry, but too many are less than the best communicators—inconsistent, inefficient, jargon-crazy, self-absorbed, or just plain boring.

The Seven Common Communication Mistakes targeted in What's Your Point? linger on—online and off—in the 21st Century. They continue to confuse and undermine the point of communication in business and in life. These seven communication shortcomings persist for a number of easily-reversible, but frequently-overlooked reasons. The Seven Mistakes are particularly harmful because they are the most common communication failings. They have been repeated, consciously and unconsciously, as long as business has existed. Social media is contaminated and limited by these Seven Common Mistakes.

The Seven Mistakes are virtually invisible to perpetrators. These apparently-simple Mistakes are not simple for organizations, groups, or individuals to eliminate permanently. These errors plague businesses and practices across professions, industries, and sectors, and persist in a variety of forms. No level of management can completely avoid these errors, nor are business owners, C-suite executives, practice principals, advisors, coaches, clients, prospects... or *you* consistently mistake-free communicators.

Regardless of why, what, and how you communicate, you're vulnerable to miscommunication. If you are not conscious of what your point is and why, miscommunication creeps in whether you're persuading, conversing, educating, correcting, engaging, collaborating, inspiring, marketing, deciding, listening....

The Seven Common Communication Mistakes are also by-products of formal education practices. The Mistakes plague graduates starting careers just as they do committed, extraordinary individuals with years of professional experience. These short-comings also give rise to most common client complaints and to familiar grievances that employees have about management and vice versa.

Ignoring these Mistakes undermines your communication efforts, which can prove expensive. It's also a frustrating waste of time for everyone involved. With clarification, conscious effort, and practice, potentially-expensive mistakes can be transformed into practical experiments and then into effective communication.

Once you recognize the *Seven Common Mistakes* and related exchange shortcomings in yourself, the next step is understanding *why* they happen and *how* to avoid them. They may be ingrained habits that reflect irrelevance and mediocrity. The Mistakes are often symptoms of significant bias and misconceptions. As understanding grows, you'll also begin to identify these Mistakes in your clients and competition, which will dramatically improve your effectiveness, relevance, and results.

By revealing the often-misunderstood roles that context, process, and content play in communication, What's Your Point? is a valuable tool for learning how to avoid these seven undermining forces. This insight aids in anticipation and identification of other communication failings in yourself and others, online and off. The resulting clarity reveals communication opportunities and how to act on them.

What's Your Point? challenges professionals, executives, advisors, coaches, owners, and entrepreneurs to tackle these communication shortcomings headon. In doing so, they'll learn to see more in themselves, to expect more from themselves, and to deliver more for their clients when it comes to communication in any medium, on any platform, in all contexts. What's your point?

#### Cut What "Crap?"

Progress in this century occurs when the best of the past is combined, consciously and innovatively, with the best of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century—present and future. **What's** *best* is part of the communication conundrum, online and off.

In every industry and profession—as the first decades reveal—the 21st Century can just be more of the same with different jargon and electronic "toys." That is, unless conscious selection and decisiveness become new individual and industry standards for professionals, entrepreneurs, executives, coaches, and advisors then consistently effective communication remains a challenge.

"The no longer relevant past," which is both evident and invisible in each profession and industry, surfaces as assumptions, influences, beliefs, standards, biases, and complacency—economic, social, educational, cultural, religious, political....These influences were dragged forward from previous centuries, carried through recession "meltdown" years, and perpetuated in good times. Here lies The Crap referred to in the title, and lots of great stuff, too. Unfortunately, we assimilate The Crap more quickly. Crap remains harder to avoid, and to scrape off, without conscious, deliberate effort.

Professional *quality management*—or whatever you call your drive to produce and deliver consistently high-quality, relevant services and products—contains a lot of communication Crap. Applying the touted best practices in your field may not be enough for sustained success in a continually-changing world.

The 21st Century may be the only one you've worked in, but those who raised and educated you have, unconsciously and deliberately, passed on 19th and 20th Century Crap—stereotypes, biases, standards, bad habits...the works. Even if you rebelled against parents, teachers, employers, and society, you've probably been contaminated by television, movies, gaming, social media, and the internet. And that's how the 20th-Century foundation was laid in the 21st Century.

What's Your Point? reveals how your perspectives, thought processes, and decision making could be unconsciously and destructively stuck in the past. This may be true even if you are actively committed to embracing new technology and collaborative approaches. As a result, your purpose, targets, goals, and everything else will be off-point, usually in ways that are invisible to you (although not always to others). For instance, if you've had trouble succeeding at something in spite of commitment, goals, and the best of intentions, you may have unknowingly perpetuated one or more of the Seven Communication Mistakes.

Purging and merging the centuries becomes a celebration of the great "stuff" from the past and of the best that is yet to come. The wisdom gained over the centuries is compatible with modern thought once The Crap is removed.

The time-honored quotations which echo *The Point* for each *Chapter* demonstrate this compatibility. In each case, someone with great credibility said it best long before our Century. History proves there are many "tough acts" to follow.

Preserving tradition and building legacies are worthwhile goals, but they can become bogged down in industry Crap. Continuity and lessons-learned are vital to improvement, but best practices and codes of ethics do not automatically ensure that "the best" is carried forward and that The Crap is left behind. Egos, cliques, and territories can entrench Crap.

Disruptive technologies feed on what's taken for granted and assumed. "We've always done it that way" thinking remains a powerful force for mediocrity, disguised as perpetuating standards and respecting "lessons learned."

Add to this communication Crap your personal accumulation of misinformation, ingrained habits, programmed responses, and "tried that once" experiences. The "personal baggage," that everyone jokes about, but keeps carrying, also contributes to The Crap. Conscious deficiencies can be accentuated by unconscious patterns. This is one reason it can seem so hard to change a value system or break a habit, even when you *really* want to.

Countless polls, studies, and marketing campaigns tell us the world is "dumbing down," attentions spans are shortening, and that **mediocrity is the new standard**. Cliché or not, the observation that "history repeats itself" remains a significant reality. What is not acknowledged and addressed, personally and professionally, will continually resurface to distract, dilute, and divert communication. Just as what disrupts your professional and personal strategies and routines, if ignored, becomes your routine. How do you consciously cut The Crap?

If you've gained experience in your field, profession, or industry, you—and many of your clients—know exactly what I mean about *The Crap*. If you don't, then open your eyes and watch where you step!

#### Hit Which "Mark?"

Here, Hit The Mark, in the subtitle Cut The Crap, Hit The Mark & Stick, means to strengthen and focus the Communication Edge, which is the point of contact, in all forms and variations, and depth of connection with target prospects and clients.

Obviously, your specific target prospects and clients must be top of mind to act on this definition. Before you can decide the best way to "strengthen and focus" and how "the point of contact and depth of connection" should materialize, the question is, "Who is the Who at the centre of all this activity?"

If your target is everyone, you've missed the point. You demonstrate you don't understand to whom your business and its services and products offer the greatest value. This generalist approach can devalue your knowledge, skills, products, and services while it exhausts resources and you.

Knowing your business means understanding *why* specific services and/or products will not work equally well for *everyone*. It's not having "something" to sell and designing a business around this product/service. It's deciding who benefits most from the "something" you have to sell or that you could develop. Who values it highly? Then, every aspect of the business is designed around the wants and needs of this target. Not only would non-targets fail to gain all the benefits of your efforts or to value them, but resources spent on non-targets are not available to help grow target market share and your business.

Your offerings can not be sold successfully without marketing and promotion which effectively communicate specific value to specific users—*The Target*. For instance, in shifting from traditional marketing, sales, and promotion to digital versions—where transparency and knowledge sharing are key—clear identification of your *Who* is vital. For instance, different target groups will prefer different social media platforms and also use them differently.

Targets need to see themselves in what you do. Success in consistently hitting the mark lies in consistently focusing on the target in everything from product/service development and delivery to website design and promotion choices. Targeting, or concentrating and focusing efforts, time, and knowledge on specific client profiles to achieve business growth, demands increased efficiency and effectiveness in every aspect of communication and your business.

A strong client-centric context dictates which communication pathways will be most effective, online and off. The client's frame of reference for decision making should be reflected everywhere: language used, social media selected, examples cited, products offered, services designed, fees charged, marketing mix selected, staff hired...and so on for every aspect and issue that defines your business or practice and the problem you solve.

If your preferred client profile is not top of mind, how well can you consistently make timely, relevant day-to-day decisions? How can you continually make the best use of limited resources like your time and the clients'?

Communication—or rather the lack of it—is the weakest link in product development, client relationship management, service delivery, quality control, productivity...and in business and life in general. By addressing failings and misdirection at the Communication Edge, overall productivity, return on investment, and satisfaction improve for you and your target clients.

This advantage translates into innovative solutions and fresh thinking that will earn you a reputation as "the best" with your Who—target prospects and clients who define your success and those who influence your professional standing and your progress. Who's your Who?

#### **Step Three: Stick!**

Doing anything well *once* is an achievement. *Consistently* doing everything well may seem like a miracle. Somewhere in between lies the art and science of consistently-exceptional client service. This is the & *Stick* in the subtitle *Cut The Crap, Hit The Mark & Stick!* This is a commonly-overlooked goal in the three-step communication process outlined in the subtitle as you'll discover in following chapters.

Here's where & Stick comes in. Not only do you want to make your point with your selected targets, but you want this achievement to launch and to sustain mutually-productive client relationships based on service excellence:

- Step 1: Follow through with your point, that is, Cut The Crap and express the point in client-centric terms.
- Step 2: Target prospects respond to your point, are engaged, and embrace your point, because you've *Hit The Mark*.
- Step 3: As clients, they Stick with your excellent client service and understand why, so they refer you to prospective clients.

After identifying the ideal target—"Who's your Who?"—continue to gather relevant and related detail. Analyze client problems and issues to match your services and/or products with under-served client needs and overlooked opportunities. On-point products and services differentiate your business and its range of offerings while building mutual trust and respect. Strengthening these connections overcomes communication challenges.

**Do you recognize miscommunication, especially when you are the cause?** If not, your *clients*—those who pay you or those you are paid to serve, from customers to employees and other stakeholders—definitely do. They may not tell you, except by not re-hiring or referring you. Which of these common online and off-line communication challenges sound familiar?

□ Do you have an impressive list of past clients, but still find that each new year brings fresh uncertainty and requires that **the scramble for paid work begin all over again**?

Do social media and networking efforts make significant demands on time and credibility, but <b>deliver insignificant or inconsistent returns</b> ?
Are <b>once-loyal clients wandering off</b> to apparently less-skilled or less-knowledgeable competitors, without ever complaining to you?
Does everything go well in a meeting or phone conversation with a prospect, client, or past client, but later you don't hear back, your calls and emails are brushed off, or, after some contact, <b>nothing comes of the time you have invested</b> ?
Did you spent many hours and dollars ensuring your website or blog encapsulates service/product offerings, along with unique differences, only to discover that the few visitors who do arrive don't get the point or spend any money?
No matter how hard you try, do you feel you're not making enough progress or, in spite of financial success, has the work you loved become stressful or unsatisfying, yet <b>you find it hard to let go</b> ?
Do you know what you want to communicate, but <b>you can't find the words</b> and, even when you can, you lack the time for clever implementation and committed follow-up?

Increasingly, many professionals and advisors accept their yes responses to questions like those above as normal and tolerable reactions in this fast-paced, distracted world. Those who think the problem lies with prospects, clients, or competitors, or that the problem can be solved merely by switching to social media have missed the point entirely.

If any of the shortcomings listed above plague you, *you* may be the source of mixed messages or confusion that strengthens barriers to increasing and sustaining client understanding and trust. You run the risk of losing out to competitors who are successfully communicating their intentions, expectations, respect, and relevant service benefits—their "stickiness." **Consistently make your point with prospects, clients, colleagues, employers, and everyone who matters to you, and you'll consistently increase and sustain "stickiness."** 

#### Who Is This Book Designed to Advance?

What's Your Point? is intended for experienced entrepreneurs, owners, professionals, executives, coaches, and advisors who may not have as much formal training in communication as they have in their chosen field.

This easily-customized creative resource provides practical suggestions and insights for professionals intent on excelling at the *Communication Edge*—

the point of contact, in all forms and variations, and the depth of connection with prospects and clients. When strategically applied to communication, the practical knowledge, problem-solving skills, and expertise acquired by business professionals and entrepreneurs can leverage existing knowledge and expedite communication effectiveness. **These professionals just may not realize this themselves.** 

Whether you measure your career in years or decades, this book reveals how to leverage your professional experience to achieve more effective communication. You'll discover how to accelerate sustainable improvement in areas you decide are relevant and vital to success for your clients and yourself.

Resolve branding, marketing, prospecting, and service delivery communication deficiencies to excel in even the weakest economy. Enhance your ability to consistently make your point in any medium, and you'll advance to the top against even the most aggressive competition.

What's Your Point? grew out of hours and years invested in analyzing, training, interviewing, evaluating, working with, and listening to experienced professionals, executives, advisors, entrepreneurs, coaches, and owners—and *their* prospects and clients—across a wide range of industries and positions from:

- Business-to-Business Specialists to those who serve consumers directly or supervise those who do
- ► Account Representatives and Business Owners to Educators, Meeting Planners, and Professional Advisors
- ► Accountants, Architects, Designers, Engineers, Brokers, Financial Advisors, Coaches, and Business Analysts to Marketing Directors, Sales Managers, C-Suite Executives, and Entrepreneurs.

This diverse group will be referred to, collectively, as *professionals and advisors* or, for simplicity, *professionals*. Professionals include those who create and/or deliver knowledge, advice, and related services and products to clients (internal and external) or customers, for their professional or personal use, in exchange for compensation and remuneration.

What's Your Point? is a resource for professionals who want the challenge and inspiration of sophisticated insight, practical innovation, quality-improving shortcuts, and proven methodology, whether or not they know how to evaluate their own communication abilities. Their bonus is learning to appreciate the communication prowess or failings of clients, prospects, competitors, and themselves. This understanding reveals how opportunity is created by ineffective communication and how effective communication seizes opportunity.

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#### Optimize Room for Improvement

What conscious effort do you make to ensure you and your services remain relevant in our perpetually-changing world? As What's Your Point? reveals how to continually seek out Room for Improvement, you'll develop a flair for practical innovation that will inspire you to...well, what would you like to achieve?

This practical, powerful communication-refocusing tool is valuable when investing time, money, and effort in your business or practice demands accurate, clear, on-point communication. Turn or return to *What's Your Point?* every time you want or need to:

- Face significant change—professional or personal—and successfully evaluate work-life equilibrium, a new career, succession strategies, a new business venture, growth potential, or competition challenges
- Tackle technology, including designing a website, social media profile, or mobile computing campaign that resonates with targets
- **Delegate to achieve new goals** when hiring staff, changing location, targeting new markets, or re-engineering your business or practice to leverage expertise, enhance profitability, and boost productivity.

You are an experienced professional and this book does not urge you to radically change the way you work. Instead, you are encouraged to take a frank, non-judgmental look at your communication knowledge and skills to identify strengths and Room for Improvement gaps. You'll discover how much of what you need is within you and around you now, not temptingly out of reach, or around the next corner, as we so often mistakenly believe.

My clients and those who attend *The Catalyst* presentations and read my content keep asking for an "ever-ready personal catalyst" to encourage and inspire them into *continuous improvement* and extended *practical innovation*. Tall order for a book, whatever its format, however, *What's Your Point?* is designed to fill this gap and represent a discernible improvement over what you're using now.

On-point content in the following chapters concentrates on providing relevant insight to make it easier and more profitable to recognize and avoid the *Seven Common Communication Mistakes*, rather than continuing to repeat them. This self-inspire book offers a selection of opportunities, suggestions, and insights for experimenting, exploring, and improvising:

- Easy **self-evaluation of communication skills and challenges** to accelerate returns for you and your practice or venture
- Simple, practical improvement of communication expertise and goal achievement to enhance target attraction and engagement

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• Actionable suggestions for side-stepping and leaping over time-wasting, guilt-ridden, established patterns in business and life

• Fresh, practical, easily-implemented ideas for moving onward and upward, regardless of challenges.

Clarity of purpose and certainty of direction are crucial to successful communication in any and all ventures. At a variety of stages and phases of careers or business ventures, *What's Your Point?* can make a difference as a unique resource:

- Before action—to help you clarify, focus, streamline...and get it right!
- After action—to assist with confirming purpose, progress, returns... and to stay on track!

The Seven Common Communication Mistakes are introduced in Chapter One, then coupled with opportunities, analyzed, resolved, and counter-balanced. Each Mistake and the many and varied opportunities its absence generates are explored in three-chapter Sections.

Chapter by chapter, this book provides insight and tools to clarify how effective communication reaps rewards, and how to improve your communication behavior and results, including return on investment. The thought-provoking questions, asked in a range of relevant contexts, plus suggestions, shortcuts, and other benefits, will help you seize opportunity.

What's Your Point? sets the stage for consistently amazing brain-to-brain communication—whatever form it takes, online or off—by hauling often-invisible, defeating communication habits into view, so they can be erased from the 21st Century. All resulting Room for Improvement is yours to explore and benefit from.

Read on to learn how to *Cut The Crap, Hit The Mark & Stick!* while you make your point with those who matter to you and your business.

PJWade

Onward & Upward—the directions that really matter!

#### One of my favorite Places to Think...



#### About the Author

PJ Wade firmly believes "Communication is everything and everything is communication." Through her out-in-front and behind-the-scenes contributions and research, PJ remains immersed in communication dynamics—online and off.

As an achievement strategist, futurist, and The Catalyst, PJ discovered first-hand what holds individuals and organizations back and what drives them to innovate. A thought-provoking speaker, author, blogger, and media commentator, PJ is intent on sharing this knowledge and challenging others—in business and in life—to design their own *brilliant future* whatever their starting point.

PJ's wide-ranging knowledge of relevant emerging trends reinforces her ability to implement "box-free, age-free" thinking. She draws on decades of research and experience in industries that define our professional and personal lives, including the media and service-driven sectors.

PJ cleverly blended the essential elements of science and business in *The Catalyst*, which is both her job description and the name of her strategic communication firm. Her earlier career as an environmental scientist contributes to PJ's unique box-free, age-free, borderless view of sustainability and the future.

An acknowledged cross-generation bridge, PJ's extensive research and multi-faceted professional development programs bring the dynamic impact of multigeneration workplaces, communities, and families into 21st-Century focus for professionals, entrepreneurs, *What's Your Point?* readers, and the organizations that serve them all.

## TECHNOLOGY ENABLES US TO REACH ALMOST ANYONE AND ANYWHERE ON THE PLANET WITHIN SECONDS!

#### HAVE OUR COMMUNICATION SKILLS IMPROVED AS DRAMATICALLY AS THE LEAP FROM QUILL PEN TO SMARTPHONE WOULD LEAD US TO BELIEVE?

#### There's less time to think than ever before—and more to think about!

Experienced entrepreneurs, owners, executives, managers, advisors, and professionals, who receive less training in communication than in their chosen profession, face additional communication challenges as technology speeds everything up.

In the 21st Century, business demands you are always prepared to communicate YOUR POINT—online and off—with prospects, clients, and those who matter.

What's Your Point? reveals how those with proven business experience can leverage their professional knowledge, problem-solving skills, and expertise to expedite communication effectiveness.

"What's Your Point?"—the pivotal 21st-Century business question—must be answered <u>before</u> you open your mouth, hit a key, or tap anything. Too often "Your Point" is not clear to you, and communication remains an <u>expensive illusion</u>."— PJ Wade The Catalyst

Discover how to Make Your Point—online and off—every time that results matter to cement your brand & ignite your business:

- Achieve on-point communication, decisive decision making and more...
- Learn Self-Leadership—the important first step before Leadership
- Master innovative thinking on-demand—inside and outside the box
- Engage on-target with prospects, clients, and those who matter to you
- Purge unconscious bias, stereotypes, limiting habits...and -isms like ageism
- Explore Your Future Point—Start-up, Succession, Unretirement...what's next?

#### Author PJ WADE "The Catalyst"

**Futurist, Strategist, Blogger & Speaker PJ Wade** cleverly merges and purges communication essentials and emerging trends to share the best of both in innovative, practical terms. Author of books, articles, columns, and professional development programs, PJ's unique, age-free, borderless view of the future catalyzes others to embrace effective communication—online and off—with all its 21st Century force.

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