Communication and Persuasion in the Digital Age

Program Details
Advancements in technology and the rapid proliferation of digital media, globally dispersed teams, and new levels of collaboration require executives to lead their organizations with sophisticated communication skills, adapted for these new ways of working. To be a successful leader today, you must be able to effectively persuade and influence at all levels, in person and virtually, and across the globe. Grounded in extensive cognitive research on how we learn and observe, Communication and Persuasion in the Digital Age is designed to help executives and managers become successful communicators in person and in virtual contexts: from group discussions to video conferencing to social media.

Edward Schiappa and Ben Shields draw on cutting-edge communication research, theories of persuasion, studies on parasocial interaction, and empirical studies on compelling storytelling to help participants solve problems, make quality decisions, and motivate people. Session topics include speaking persuasively, visual persuasion, communicating in globally distributed teams, adapting messages to audiences, and arguing civilly to produce good decisions.

Participants
Effective communicators are valued at all levels of an organization. If your responsibilities include interacting in some shape or form with others, then this program is for you. Typical participants’ areas of expertise tend to include:

- Sales and marketing
- Planning and development
- Operations management
- Strategic partnerships
- Supply-chain agreements
- Recruitment and human resources

Takeaways
The program will help you leverage new communication skills and harness the power of persuasion to:

- **Influence** attitudes and change behaviors in your organization
- **Understand** how new technology shapes the way we work and communicate
- **Bring your message** and your medium into alignment
- **Manage virtual communications** with power and presence
- **Apply the latest research** to become a confident and inspiring public speaker
- **Create** a compelling story to galvanize and motivate people
- **Adapt and deliver** your message across different media channels and to diverse audiences
- **Construct and evaluate** claims and arguments with positive outcomes
- **Elevate** the level of discourse within your organization

Program Faculty
**Edward Schiappa** is Professor and Head of Comparative Media Studies/Writing in MIT’s School of Humanities and Social Sciences, where he holds the John E. Burchard Chair of Humanities. In 2009, Schiappa was named a Distinguished Scholar by the National Communication Association for his original research in persuasion, media effects, and argumentation.

**Ben Shields** is a Lecturer in Managerial Communication at MIT Sloan. His research focuses on the intersection of social media technologies, data analytics, and audience behavior. He has written two books, and holds a BS and MA in communication studies and a PhD in media, technology, and society, all from Northwestern University.

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# Communication and Persuasion in the Digital Age

## Sample Program Schedule

### Day 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:00 AM – 8:45 AM</td>
<td>Registration and Continental Breakfast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:45 AM – 9:00 AM</td>
<td>Introductions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00 AM – 10:30 AM</td>
<td>Persuading, Fast and Slow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:45 AM – 12:15 PM</td>
<td>Persuasion as Compliance Gaining: Persuading One on One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:15 PM – 1:15 PM</td>
<td>Networking Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:15 PM – 2:45 PM</td>
<td>Speaking Persuasively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:00 PM – 4:30 PM</td>
<td>Visual Persuasion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:30 PM – 5:30 PM</td>
<td>Reception</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Day 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:00 AM – 8:30 AM</td>
<td>Continental Breakfast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:30 AM – 10:00 AM</td>
<td>Defining Your Online Identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:15 AM – 11:45 AM</td>
<td>Communicating with Data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:45 AM – 12:45 PM</td>
<td>Networking Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:45 PM – 2:15 PM</td>
<td>Telling a Compelling Story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:30 PM – 4:00 PM</td>
<td>Adapting Messages to Audiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:00 PM – 4:15 PM</td>
<td>Program Feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:15 PM – 4:15 PM</td>
<td>Adjournment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Session Details

### Persuading, Fast and Slow

This program introduces participants to two sets of persuasive theories—rational appeals that require and encourage “slow” thinking, and emotional appeals that encourage “fast” thinking. Theories taught include the Elaboration Likelihood Theory, Social Judgment Theory, and Narrative Transportation Theory.

### Speaking Persuasively

This program provides 10 steps to Effective Public Speaking, introduces persuasive appeals of ethos, logos, and pathos, and how to “perform” credibility.

### Telling a Compelling Story

This program focuses on the role of narrative in persuasion in order to unpack how one constructs a compelling story that resonates with difference audiences. We will include communication challenges such as adapting to internal and external audiences. Special emphasis on cross-generational communication within an organization, such as adapting to Millennials.

### Visual Persuasion

This program describes the cognitive differences between how images and words are processed (dualsemantic theory) in order to understand why no portfolio of persuasive communication is complete without a strategic approach to visual persuasion. Describes the notions of visual semantics and syntax and how to strike “the responsive chord” with audiences.

### Communicating in Globally Distributed Teams

This session draws on participants’ own experiences with geographically dispersed teams to map the landscape of challenges. It then goes more deeply into what research can tell us about the particular challenges of geographical configuration, trust, and mutual knowledge.

### Adapting Messages to Audiences

This program provides a framework for understanding task-oriented and relational-oriented communication, then uses that framework to different communication challenges involving different communication technologies.

### Arguing Civilly to Produce Good Decisions 1: How Argument Works

The goal of this session is to enhance participants’ ability both to generate and to evaluate arguments. Describes common types of claims and forms of reasoning that are used in all contexts.

### Arguing Civilly to Produce Good Decisions 2: From Argument to Inquiry

This program describes how “argument” is often misunderstood in our culture as a form of combat rather than as a tool of inquiry and truth seeking. Will describe the causes of “verbal aggression” and how to avoid it, and how to encourage norms of civil discourse within an organization.

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