

THE BIG IDEA

The gap between what people know and what they share is enormous **and closing that gap is your job, not theirs**. The professional who learns to ask well doesn't just win more business. They become the person everyone wants to talk to.

THE GOLDEN RULE

The quality of your questions determines the quality of your conversation.

Wetzler's ASK Method and the 1st 5 Minutes are built on the same non-negotiable: curiosity is a choice you make before the conversation starts, not a feeling you wait to arrive. Skip that choice, and every technique after it collapses.

THE ASK METHOD • JEFF WETZLER	THE 1ST 5 MINUTES
CHOOSE CURIOSITY Decide before you walk in that you actually want to know what they think, feel, and know. Not confirm. Discover.	PRE-GAME • 5 BEFORE THE 5 Find five connection points before the conversation starts. Walk in primed to look at them, not at yourself.
CREATE SAFETY Even the best question fails if the other person doesn't feel safe answering honestly. Safety is built before you ever ask.	1ST MINUTE • PERSONAL PHASE The first sixty seconds aren't for pitching. They're for answering the four silent questions before anyone realizes you're answering them.
POSE QUALITY QUESTIONS One question is an entry point. Climb the ladder from closed to open to exploratory, and never stack more than one at a time.	MIDDLE 3 • ALL IN (2QM) The Two Question Minimum, executed through the Double-Click. Never stop at one. Go deeper on the same thread before you move on.
LISTEN TO LEARN Listening to respond means you're half in your own head. Listening to learn means your only job is to understand.	LOCKED-IN LISTENING Noise-canceling focus. Block your own agenda and hear all four layers: the words, the emotion, the belief, the context.
REFLECT & RECONNECT The step almost nobody teaches. Process what you heard, then close the loop by telling them what you're doing with it.	LAST MINUTE • PROBLEM PHASE Reflect what you've gathered back to them in their language. Not a pitch. A mirror that proves you actually heard them.

■ CONCEPT DEEP DIVE

01 CURIOSITY ISN'T A FEELING, IT'S A DECISION

Wetzler calls it the Assumption Trap: you think you already know, so you don't really ask. And even when you do, you're listening for confirmation, not for something new. Choosing curiosity means deciding, before you walk in, that you're there to discover, not to perform.

ELITE MOVE:

Build your Pre-Game around five connection points, not data points, before every conversation.

"I want to know something real about you before we go anywhere else."

02 SAFETY IS BUILT BEFORE YOU EVER ASK

A polite non-answer isn't disinterest. It's a safety failure. Wetzler names four questions people silently ask before they'll share anything honest: can I trust you, will it matter, will it be used against me, do you actually care. Your tone and timing answer those questions before your first real question ever lands.

ELITE MOVE:

Track your Q2A Ratio — your questions to your answers — and make sure it never tilts toward you.

"No business, no pitch, no agenda — just tell me what's actually going on."

03 ONE QUESTION IS AN ENTRY POINT, NOT A CONVERSATION

Most professionals ask one question in the 1st 5 Minutes, and it's almost always a throw-away. Wetzler's Question Ladder climbs from closed to open to exploratory. Stack multiple questions at once and it stops being a conversation — it becomes a deposition.

ELITE MOVE:

Deploy the Double-Click: after their answer, don't pivot. Go deeper on the same thread.

"Tell me more."

■ **CONCEPT DEEP DIVE**

**04 LISTENING TO RESPOND ISN'T
LISTENING AT ALL**

Listening to respond means you're half in the conversation, half in your own head preparing what's next. Listening to learn means your only job is to understand — all four layers: the words, the emotion, the belief, the context underneath.

ELITE MOVE:

Put on your Locked-In Listening headphones. Block your own agenda; hear only what matters.

"What else is going on for you with this?"

**05 THE STEP ALMOST NOBODY
TEACHES**

Reflect means you actually process what you heard instead of filing it away. Reconnect means you go back and close the loop: here's what I heard, here's what I'm doing with it, here's what I still want to understand.

ELITE MOVE:

Send a one-paragraph follow-up within 24 hours. Not a pitch. A mirror.

"Here's what stood out to me, and here's what I'm still curious about."

3 ACTION ITEMS

1 Question Your Question-Asking

Audit your last conversation. How many questions did you really ask? What type? Could you have gone deeper?

2 Deploy the Double-Click

Next conversation, one commitment: after their first answer, don't pivot. Say "tell me more" and stay in the folder.

3 Close the Loop

Within 24 hours of a meaningful conversation, send one paragraph: here's what I heard, here's what stood out, here's what I'm still curious about.



The competitive advantage of the future is not what you know. It's how well you can access what others know.

— Jeff Wetzler, author of ASK



CARRY FORWARD QUESTIONS

1. Am I actually locked in right now, or is my mind already three steps ahead?
2. Am I working the fundamentals of this conversation, or reaching for something flashier?

FEATURED AUTHOR

Jeff Wetzler

Author of ASK • Co-CEO, Transcend

Jeff Wetzler is a Harvard-trained organizational learning expert and executive coach who has spent decades helping leaders unlock what the people around them already know but rarely say. He is the co-founder of Transcend and previously served as Chief Learning Officer at Teach For America. In ASK, he distills a quarter-century of that work into a five-step method — Choose Curiosity, Make It Safe, Pose Quality Questions, Listen to Learn, and Reflect and Reconnect — for surfacing the hidden wisdom in every conversation.

CONNECT WITH JEFF WETZLER

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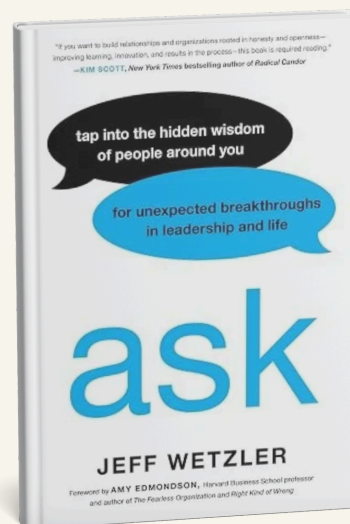
FEATURED BOOK

ASK

Tap Into the Hidden Wisdom of People Around You for Unexpected Breakthroughs in Leadership and Life

Jeff Wetzler is a Harvard-trained organizational learning expert and executive coach who has spent decades helping leaders unlock what the people around them already know but rarely say. He is the co-founder of Transcend and previously served as Chief Learning Officer at Teach For America. In ASK, he distills a quarter-century of that work into a five-step method — Choose Curiosity, Make It Safe, Pose Quality Questions, Listen to Learn, and Reflect and Reconnect — for surfacing the hidden wisdom in every conversation.

[Get the Book →](#)



BONUS DEEP DIVE: THE SCIENCE OF ASKING AND LISTENING

Listening to Learn vs. Listening to Respond only got a few sentences in this episode, but it's the hinge the whole ASK Method swings on. Here's what the research actually says about what Wetzler — and the 1st 5 Minutes — are teaching you to do.

1 Brooks & John, Harvard Business Review (2018) [View Source →](#)

Question-asking builds trust and surfaces information people would otherwise withhold — the research case for why Step 3, Pose Quality Questions, is a business skill, not a soft one.

2 Huang, Yeomans, Brooks, Minson & Gino, Journal of Personality and Social Psychology (2017) [View Source →](#)

People who ask more follow-up questions are consistently better liked by their conversation partners. This is the data behind the Double-Click: the second question, not the first, is what builds the relationship.

3 Itzchakov, DeMarree, Kluger & Turjeman-Levi, Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin (2018) [View Source →](#)

High-quality, nonjudgmental listening measurably reduces a speaker's social anxiety and sharpens their own thinking. This is the mechanism underneath Locked-In Listening: your attention changes what they're able to tell you.

4 Letendre Jauniaux & Lawford, Frontiers in Psychology (2024) [View Source →](#)

This literature review confirms interpersonal curiosity can be deliberately activated as a state, not just a fixed trait — the scientific backbone of Wetzler's claim that curiosity is a choice, and of the Pre-Game itself.

BY BRYAN BUCKLEY

THE 1ST 5 MINUTES

If Wetzler's ASK Method got you thinking about how few real questions you ask, The 1st 5 Minutes shows you exactly where to put them. It breaks down the Pre-Game, the Personal Phase, the Middle 3, and the Last Minute — the same five-step arc as ASK, built specifically for the opening minutes of a business conversation, where most professionals never make it past a single throw-away question.

Get the Book → bryanbuckleyspeaks.com



TURN YOUR 1ST 5 MINUTES INTO YOUR COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE — LEVERAGE OR LOSE IT.

Bryan Buckley is the leading authority on the 1st 5 Minutes of a business conversation — 5X author, speaker, corporate trainer, and podcast host. He helps sales professionals and leaders develop, deepen, and master their business communication skills so every conversation counts.

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