

# Rob Fitzpatrick

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

people, customer, conversation, questions, surveys, business, building, realised, product, data, talk, book, mom, commitment, budgets, spend, podcast, hiring, sales, person

### **Susan Heaton-Wright** 00:00

Welcome to the superstar communicator podcast. My name is Susan Heaton-Wright, a leading impact speaking and communications expert. My aim is to show you how to make an impact. So you will be heard or listened to and respected to career success. Listen weekly to the podcast, and go to our website, [www.superstarcommunicator.com](http://www.superstarcommunicator.com). Hello, everybody, I hope you are keeping well before we have the interview and you are going to love this. I just wanted to let you know what we're doing here at Superstar communicator. Well, as you know, I have been delivering all sorts of virtual workshops as well as coaching. And now I have started to record the masterclasses and they are available for you to purchase alongside a worksheet and outcomes and some work that you do yourself. So that you really embed the learning, and you need to go to [superstarcommunicator.com/store](http://superstarcommunicator.com/store), and everything is there. So I hope you will find these of interest, and it will help you be a Superstar communicator. The other thing is remember that we have our monthly master classes. If you want to be kept informed of these, please register your interest at [superstarcommunicator.com/webinar-interest](http://superstarcommunicator.com/webinar-interest), I will put all of that information in the notes. So thanks very much for listening and enjoy this interview. Hello, everybody, this is Susan Heaton-Wright. I hope you are keeping well. And as I have promised, we have got a real gem of a guest on the other end of the internet, in the mountain side of Spain, which is really exciting. This gentleman is called Rob Fitzpatrick. He's an entrepreneur of 13 years, the author of three books, including - 'The mom test', 'How to talk to customers', and 'Figure out if your business is a good idea', when everyone is lying to you, which is used globally by entrepreneurs of all stripes, and taught at top universities like Harvard, MIT, UCL, and others. Welcome.

02:49

Thank you so much for having me. It's a pleasure to be here.

### **Susan Heaton-Wright** 02:51

You know, I am listening to your latest book, 'The mom test' on Audible books.

02:58

So you are already well familiar with my voice, then. Oh, yeah.

### **Susan Heaton-Wright** 03:02

It is nice having you next to me, and coaching me in asking questions. What a good name and what a good concept, because your mom, and I'm a mom of a 20 year old, I totally get being on the other side, not wanting to crush the aspirations of your son.

03:23

It is for anyone who is I guess new to the book, that's where this name comes from . I had a very supportive mother, like you I would imagine. So every time I brought her an idea, she would say, that's amazing, it's incredible, it's so great. Eventually as I got into business, I heard this rule, never asked your mom, if your business is a good idea, cause she loves you and she thinks everything you do is great. So she'll lie to you, not out of malice but out of support. But the assumption that's implicit in that claim is that, other people will tell you the truth. When I tried it with my first business, and we ultimately went out of business, despite having great investors, some good early customers, a great team. It was hard for years, and we still failed. I was like, wow, I asked customers what they cared about, and they lied to me, you know, not out of malice but out of support. I realised that you need to flip it, and stop expecting other people to tell you the truth. Start designing your questions, and framing the conversation in a way which makes it easy for them to tell you the truth, which makes it impossible for them to lie to you. In those cases, even your mom, the most biased and supportive person can't lie to you. Again, not because she's changed anything she's doing ,but because you've changed how you're asking the questions. It applies to feedback, negotiation, hiring, fundraising, sales, building new products, it applies to so many different areas. Took me a long time to figure out but yeah, once you know how it works, is very simple.

**Susan Heaton-Wright** 04:41

Do you know this is absolutely super because, of course, this podcast is all about spoken communication ,feedback, and asking for advice. Are some of the key things that we use when spoken communication.

05:01

I mean, it's like entrepreneurs come to me all the time now, , because they all read my book, or they all read my blog, and they will ask me questions. I can tell that they want my stamp of approval ,to make them confident that they can move forward with their business. If it is something I happen to be an extreme subject matter expert, and then sure, I'll say, Oh, this is how the industry works or works this way. But 99 times out of 100, I just say, listen, I don't know, I'm not your customer. I have no idea if it's a good idea. I thought Instagram was a stupid idea, look how well that turned out. I don't know, just because I wrote a book or you like, it doesn't mean that I have a view of the future, right. So the conversations I love to have, and the feedback I love to give is not about whether someone's idea is good or bad, but about how they can find out for themselves if it's good or bad. That is also the way like, I had incredible mentors and coaches in my first company, and I wasted them because I asked the wrong types of questions to them. I would either try to impress them, I would say, hey, we got all this amazing progress this week, blah, blah, blah and they'd say, Wow, that's really good. You sounds like you're doing great, I guess you don't need help. Or I would ask them for just their opinion, as they should we do this or this and they say this. What I learned afterwards, is this far more useful if you can work with them, not about the decision, but about the decision making process. Like, hey, this is the data I've got, this is what happened, here's how the conversation went, here's my notes from the meeting, could I talk through this meeting with you, tell you what I'm thinking this means, and let's come to a decision with it together. So you're not sharing the conclusion or the opinion or the judgement, you're sharing the underlying data and the decision making process. And then you're working on that together. And I've gotten so much more out of the people who are willing to help me once I started approaching it that way.

**Susan Heaton-Wright** 06:51

That is superb. Now, I know that we were talking before we started the podcast interview about how we can actually modify the data, even before we present it to somebody else.

07:08

I have seen that there's three places that the data becomes bad. So you can get bad data by asking bad questions. And also, sometimes if you ask good questions in a bad way, like for example, if you're asking someone about budgets, but you're in a very formal meeting, they're gonna think that anything they tell you will be used against them during negotiations later, because the formal context creates a negotiation atmosphere, and it creates a sales atmosphere. Whereas if you asked that exact same question at a cafe of the same person, they would tell you the answer. So the questions you asked, and the context is the first place you can get bad data. Then after that as your memory. I'm a huge stickler for taking good notes during meetings. It is lots easier now with zoom. A lot of customer conversations, and feedback conversations move on to zoom, you can ask for permission to record, you can record, you can timestamp the highlights, you can share those with your team. But if you don't take those sorts of notes that sort of record, you end up with an emotional memory, not a data memory. So you remember that the conversation was fun, or that the person seemed to like you. Then your brain since you can't remember exactly what was said, it translates that positive emotion into intent to purchase. So you think, wow, they liked me, it was a phone conversation, that must mean they're a customer but that's not true. There is loads of people I like who I'm friends with, who I admire and who I want to help, but I'm not going to buy their stuff, because it's not for me. So that's the second place is your memory, you got to take good notes. Then third is the decision making. This is again, we mentioned it before, but this is why I tried to share the notes with my whole team, or my mentors, or my coaches or my advisors, or my friends, anyone I can. Then we come to a decision together because otherwise, even if you've asked perfect questions, and you've taken perfect notes, if you make the decision by yourself, you've made a single point of failure in your own head. For me, that's very high risk, if I'm asking a team to believe in me, or I'm going to spend the next five years of my life on a project. So, I want to do that and then of course, like sometimes, especially like when I used to be a freelancer or consultant for a little bit. People would hire me and they'd say, hey, I want you to find out if this is a good idea to go do customer research. I would do it and I'd say great new it's a terrible idea you don't need to waste your time and that will be 1000 euros, please. They would say, what do you mean is a terrible idea? It's like, Listen, I talked to a bunch of people, no one cares at all. They have zero interest in this. They're totally happy with the current solution, don't waste your time. They go, you're fired. You're terrible at your job. What I realised is they weren't hiring me to find the truth. They were hiring me because they felt like they needed to tick a box to say that they talked to customers. Yes. It's like, well, okay, that's not the type of work I want to do, right? This is why I'm a big believer in the product owner. Whether it's the founder, the product designer, the strategic like someone who's senior who's in charge, who can make decisions needs to be the one who's in front of the customers or learning from the customers at least some of the time because that's the only way that the bad news gets integrated. The bad news is the most impactful, that's what you're searching for the whole point of customer conversations is to find what they don't care about and if you can avoid building that "what".

**Susan Heaton-Wright** 10:12

So often when we send out surveys, perhaps customer surveys, or do a little poll, actually, I'm sure that other people are like me, I'm being honest here, we can bias it to what information we want to get.

10:31

Yeah, surveys are extremely fragile. Now, surveys are not my specialty, I tried them a little bit, and I realised I was getting garbage data. So I stopped doing them, I much prefer having a small number of good deep in person compensations, as opposed to statistically significant data that doesn't help me make any better decisions. And also, I realised that most of the stuff you can survey for you can Google for and googling is even faster than surveying. So it's like, Where's the use case here? I do believe in surveys for your existing customers. So to understand people who already like you, because they'll spend the time they can explain why they made a decision for existing customers. I think surveys are great. But for people who aren't yet customers, I would much much rather talk to five in person than survey 5 million. Surveys are fragile, I have realised that the specific way you ask a question has so much bearing on the answer you get, you can very easily nudge these conversations off track. I have been doing this pretty enthusiastically for more than a decade. People think I'm pretty good at it. I think I'm pretty good at it. I still screw these conversations up all the time. But if you're doing it live, you can catch yourself because you notice some confusion in their eyes, or you notice an emotional tick in their face. You are like, Oh, wait, and that that reminds you that you've gone slightly off track, and then you can fix it. Whereas with surveys, you don't get the instant feedback about those little mistakes you're making. The way you're asking the questions and small changes in wording or even there is some fascinating data about political surveys. If you just swap the order of the questions, it completely changes people's apparent political beliefs. They're the same questions, they're just in a different order. So to me surveys are very fragile for getting to the truth. Whereas in person conversations are a little more robust, they're more forgiving of your mistakes, and you're gonna make mistakes, because this stuff's delicate.

**Susan Heaton-Wright** 12:17

And just to let you know, I worked in a market research company for a year before I went off and trained to be an opera singer. And we would be asked to clean the data. So we would alter tape. And that would be part of our job to make sure that it fit in with what the client just to let you know.

12:43

Yeah, that stuff distressing a comment. I was just reading about, sometimes big advertising spends, there just aren't enough impressions in the world to use all the money, so that they'll spin up a botnet and get a bunch of bots, clicking on ads or viewing ads to use the rest of your budget. Obviously, they're not everyone's a bad actor, and there's good stuff out there too. But yeah, it's, uh, I don't know, I want to be in the room, I want to see it myself. And I want the real data. That's just my view.

**Susan Heaton-Wright** 13:08

Now, we're human beings, and we all have unconscious bias. That presumably can lead to feedback and data and information that might not be a value to us, when we're making decisions. What's your feeling about that?

13:29

So big dividing line I would make is that if you're talking about your idea, you're going to get lied to. Because when you introduce your idea, you also expose your ego. People realise what's going on and they don't want to be the one to make you cry. So if you go in and you say, hey, I've got an idea to

improve email security, it works like this. And this, it's got these features, it's this easy to use, people are usually going to give you compliments, they're gonna say, Wow, that's amazing. Or they're gonna give you feature requests. Oh, is it going to integrate with Outlook and Gmail? You? Oh, yeah. Yeah, we can do that. It'll take a few extra months. 10s of 1000s of dollars. Yeah, we'll build that, that is a great idea. So you get opinions compliments, or you get these hypothetical future promises? It's like, yeah, I might use something like that. Yeah, I think I would. If you've ever failed a new year's resolution to go to the gym every day, you know, how much a hypothetical future promises worth. So that's like, what causes the lies is when you lead with your ideas, and you can basically resolve this in two ways. You can either ask for a commitment. So if you're at the pitching stage, if you've already got a promise, or sorry, if you've already got a product, and you're ready for a binary do they want it or not? Is this the right thing and they built the right thing. You can ask for a commitment. That could be something in a business context, it could be an introduction to their boss, or their lawyers. It could be information about their budgets, or their buying process or their timelines, these sorts of buying secrets or a stakeholder mapping or connections inside the organisation. That's the moment when suddenly you're asking them for something that's not easy for them to give you unless they actually care. So use that to cut through the compliments, not in a tricky way, you're not trying to trick them, you're not trying to steal their money, but you're trying to give them an easy opportunity to say, Actually, you know what, I'm not quite comfortable with that. Or even if you see this emotional tick, you can back off. And it's like, oh, hey, listen, I don't need to talk to your boss now. But can I ask, Where would we need to get to, for you to feel comfortable making that introduction, and you get a conditional commitment? And sometimes they'll say, listen, honestly, this just isn't for us. I don't think I can ever make that introduction. Other times, they'll say, Well, listen, we can't be your first customer we are not a risky business. But if you had one or two other customers, and you gave us a case study and a one pager, I can't guarantee anything, but I'll introduce to my boss at that point, and you go, Okay, so at least you know, what you're trying to work towards. That is a lot of the art of these conversations is turning compliments and fluffy, hypothetical commitments and opinions into actual data about do they really care? Like, everyone already knows how to do this? If you've ever dated people, right? It's like, you can be annoying and get a fake phone number. But that's not right. So you're trying to be like, Oh, no, they're not that interested in man, then you back away and you spend your time elsewhere. There is this like rom com myth that you just keep being persistent, and it eventually works out. But it I don't know, in my experience, that doesn't work in romance. And it doesn't work in business, either. It's like much better to find the people who want to talk to you, instead of trying to convince the people who hate you that you're great. So anyway, asking for commitments is one way to cut through the lies. The other way is extremely simple this is what the first few chapters of the mom's tests is about. It is just talking about their life instead of your idea. So again, to use the email security example, you would not say what do you think of my email security app? You would say, hey, weird question. I saw that, like Hillary Clinton just had all their emails hacked. You know, that seems like a disaster. And, you know, so now you've opened the topic, they start talking about email security, you know, it's like, oh, yeah, that's crazy. She lost the election, because that it's like, well listen to you do anything about your email security? And they go, No, I just ignore it. It's like, Well, have you ever thought about doing something? They're like, no, I really don't care. It's like, what about your company? No, we don't care. It's like, okay, you know, moving on, they don't care, right? Like, that's the negative data that is so precious that you were searching for. And if you start with your idea, you will never get it never in a million years, because they're going to realise that saying that would crush your dreams. Whereas if you just ask about their life, what are you already doing? And why are you doing it that way? They'll just tell you, and then you can make your own

decision about what that behaviour means. And sometimes they'll say, yeah, it's a nightmare. We hired a security firm, we must have spent a million dollars on them over the last four years, you know, we've now got like three people in IT who are dealing with this, we got sued last year, because of it. It's a nightmare. We tried every new Aha, you know, this is a motivated customer. That's someone who really cares and is likely to be my first customer, even though there's not very much evidence that my business is working. This applies to freelancing this applies to everything, right? Like, do they care, once you're already up and running, people don't need to care that much, because you've got a lot of success behind you. But for your first customer, people have to really care. And so you're searching for that emotion. And as much as you're searching for, whatever the budget.

**Susan Heaton-Wright 18:15**

This is what you know, really interesting. You keep saying about having a conversation and watching people's response. So those little sort of emotional leaks, for it for want of a better word. So do you advocate actually having a live conversation? Either assume, because it obviously we're not able to have face to face as much, or is hiding behind an email or a survey, okay.

18:47

I highly recommend face to face as much as possible. But it's not possible in every industry. So for example, if you're building a product and mental health or domestic abuse, it would be harder to get people into a face to face conversation, because it's a much more sensitive topic. So in those cases, like the anonymity helps people, and you get better information if you're able to respect people's anonymity. But in most cases, if it's something people are happy to talk about, if you can get them face to face much better, and I am not naturally good at this. But, over time, you can get some signals that the conversation is going off the rails or that the other person is disengaging, and you don't have to be like a super not like natural conversationalist to pick up on this. It's like, they just check their phone again, it's like, are they just, yeah, whatever. If you drop in these opportunities for them to easily end the conversation or to back out. So basically what you want to flip it so most people, they've watched too many movies about sales, and so they think they need to force the person to keep saying yes or to continue they make it difficult to say no. That might be fine for sales, but in the early stages when you're still trying to figure out if you're building the right thing, or if they care at all, you want to make it as easy as possible to say no. And you want to make it hard to say yes, because you want the yeses to mean something. Because Also, if you're starting out as an entrepreneur, or if you're in a corporation, you're trying to decide whether or not to invest effort in a partnership, or whether to hire someone or whatever you want to know they really care, because it's going to take a significant amount of your time and attention and energy and resources to follow through on this. So you only want to spend that resource if the other party is motivated. The way you figure that out. The way you figure out if you're building the right product, the right startup, the right whatever, is you make it as easy as possible to say no. So for example, I was talking to a woman who ran a creative agency in London, and I was building some software, and we were doing kind of a basic customer conversation, we found some excuse to chat, I'd said, Hey, you know, you've got 10 years in this industry, you can help me out so much. I'm trying to build something in this, I don't have anything to sell you. It's not a pitch. But like, if you were willing to share some of your experiences, you could really just save me so many hours. So you know, people like that they like the opportunity to help as long as you're clear about how they're going to help you what people don't like if you say hey, can we just chat for 30 minutes? I guarantee you 100% failure rate? Yes. But if you say can we chat, because you in

particular can help me for this particular reason. And if you make it clear anyway, so we got it, we had this chat, and I was like asking, How does she run her agency? What she already doing? Why does she do it that way? What are the problems, etc. You know, mom test one o one and she seemed like a perfect customer, right? She was excited, she was passionate, she really cared, she was already trying to solve the problems. And I was in a bit of a pickle, because on the one hand, I told her I didn't have anything to sell when really I did. On the other hand, I wasn't the product wasn't ready. So I would love to sell it to her in like three months. And so I'm trying to think like, Okay, well, gosh, is she serious? Is she really a customer? Or are we just having a phone conversation? Because we'd also gotten along? Well, we were telling jokes, we're having a good time, right? Maybe that was it. And so I was trying to think like, what's the commitment, I can ask for this appropriate for the stage of where my product is at? So I was like, okay, it's gonna be a time commitment and a reputation commitment. So I said, Hey, listen, well, first, you ask permission to transition from a learning conversation to a pitch conversation. So at first I said, and I gave her an easy out, like, this is the important thing. This is the point I was trying to make with my 20 minute monologue.

22:33

Like I said, Listen, you've already been so generous, you've helped me out so much. Like this meeting, we're done, you've helped me out its been incredible. But I'm also building a product in this space, which is dealing with some stuff, it sounds like it would be relevant for you. If you want it to take another 15 minutes. I'd love to show it to you. But again, I know you're super busy. It's like we can wrap it here. So I made the know as easy as possible and she said, Actually, no, I'd love to see it. This is a really important issue for us. Yeah, I've got time now let's do it. I was like, Okay, great. So I switched into the the pitch we give it, she is ike, I love it, this is incredible. We could use this to change our lives, best product ever. And here in my head, I'm of course thinking she's lying to me. She's trying to trick me. She's trying to force me to waste 10 years of my life building a product She's not even gonna buy. This has happened to me before. And so then I'm thinking like, okay, what's the commitment, I can ask to figure out if there's actual intent to purchase here. And so I was like, Well, listen, it's not ready yet. It's not going to be ready for a few months. But if you're willing, I'd love to come into your agency. This week or next week, spend a couple of hours with the rest of your team, walk them through the mockups, the paper prototypes, make sure that this is really going to achieve what you want so that we can build the right thing for you. And the whole tone of the conversation changed. You know, it had been fun had been jokey. It had been laughy, it have been energetic, and she goes on. She's like audibly groans because I've now asked for something that was not free for her to give me. I wasn't asking for money, but I was asking for her team's time. Yes. And I was asking for some of her reputation.

**Susan Heaton-Wright** 24:08

Hello. I'm still here.

24:11

I'm losing a little bit of connection. So I'll just pause and it must be when it gets windy out the trees blow into the way of the internet line of sight. Anyway. So when I asked for the commitment, the whole tone of the conversation changed. She audibly groaned, you know, she's like, ah, because I was asking for something valuable, not just a compliment or an opinion, but her team's time. And there was quite a long pause. And then eventually she said, Yes, I hate to do this, but this is really important for us, when can

you come in? And I said, aha, she's a customer. You know, no money has changed hands but by being willing to introduce me to her team and use her team's time, and she demonstrated that she was willing to invest and that's what you're looking for use a combination of these things, ask about their life instead of asking their opinion of your idea. If you do introduce your idea, make sure you ask for a commitment. And with those simple tools, and as much as possible, keep the context casual, the more formal the context, the more you get lied to. And focus groups are the worst, because they're the most formal, right? Never do focus groups, try to meet people one on one, try to allow them put them in a place where they feel safe to reveal their weakness, because their problems, their failures are the issues that your business or product is going to resolve. Right? So they need to be in a safe space. If you put a bunch of customers together, they get more focused on impressing each other, then I'm telling the truth.

**Susan Heaton-Wright 25:38**

Oh, this is absolutely super. Now I always ask my guests for three top tips. But I want to be a little bit cheeky here. Because my business, buddy, Gareth, put me on to you because he recommended your book, because he's been listening to audible as well. And we often chat, I want to ask you three top tips that could help Gareth with the development of his software. I obviously for therapists found to be very, I mentioned his main name. So product or his name.

26:21

Can I ask Is he is he selling to big businesses, small businesses? Is he marketing to individuals marketing to freelancers? What's the like the rough

**Susan Heaton-Wright 26:30**

The small business selling

26:33

To big businesses, small business, but he's individually talking to them. So it's a direct sales process. He's actually speaking with him. Cool. So in that case, and does he have customers yet?

**Susan Heaton-Wright 26:46**

Oh, yes. The product. Okay. He's got a company for three years, but obviously, wanting perfect. Yeah.

26:55

So, Gareth, already doing great. So if you've got customers, and they're happy, and they're renewing, that shows the you've already solved a lot of problems, right? You found a problem people care about you found a customer segment, who cares, you've created something

**Susan Heaton-Wright 27:12**

sorry, suddenly gone silent.

27:15

So if you've already got customers, you're already doing a lot of things, right? You found a problem that people care about, you found a customer segment who it works for, you built a solution that's credible, right? like everything's going great. So it's about optimization, It's about what's next. The highest impact



and simplest tip, and you may already be doing this if you're running a sales process, because good sales are built around this. But basically, they carve out a few minutes at the beginning of each customer interaction. And give yourself an excuse not to pitch for at least a few minutes. So often, when you open a conversation in a sales context, or with a new potential client, or even to a customer support, it becomes a pitch meeting by default. So people say hey, what's new, or you say, hey, let me show you what's new. It's easy. Like it feels like the the natural excuse. And in person, there was this very, especially if it was someone you already knew there was this comfortable space of small talk. And you can use the small talk to ask, Hey, weird question, how are you guys dealing with this issue? or How has your business been working with this? Or, hey, I've really been struggling with this. What are some of my other clients really struggling with this? Or how's it working out for you? And those few minutes a small talk where where the meaningful learning happened? And after that you switch into, you know, the pitch the demo the sales meeting, and then it then it's more Yes, no. And especially now with zoom, that's even less natural to find that space. But if you can do it, it's an absolute game changer, because it allows you to double the value of the time you're already spending because you're already spending the time on the sales calls. And if you can get this sort of open ended learning about them. Also, it helps informs you about well, what's the next crucial feature? What's the next product? Can we find a way to strengthen our business model? It all comes from that. And the process I use is with my teams is each week, we kind of think what are the most important things we're trying to learn this week. You can view this in the positive way, like what would be most valuable if we learned it, or you could do it in the negative way, like what's going to kill us if we don't learn it, like what's the existential risk. And typically, when you're first starting a business or a new product, it's all existential risk. And over time, it becomes stable, and that it's about opportunity and upside. But you decide, and I'd like to have two or three things I'm trying to learn each week. It might be like, what are the budgets? Or it might be like, who are the stakeholders? Or it might be like, why are they using Google Docs or Excel instead of our beautiful solution? Like it could be anything but you have these big learning goals. And it's not a checklist of 20 questions, but it's two or three topics or areas that you're interested in exploring, because one of the mistakes I see people make is they get a bit too clinical, and they go question one of 20 on a scale of one to five. But now all you're doing is an in person inefficient survey. Like, think of it like, and I'm kind of going off topic, I'm sure Gareth doesn't need his advice, right. He's already in business and doing well. So I'm sure he's way past this, but it might be relevant for some other listeners.

30:19

The

30:21

My biggest advice for the actual operations for the feel of the customer conversations is to treat it the same way you treat a heartfelt conversation with a friend where they've had a bad day. So if you had a friend who just got dumped by their husband or wife, you wouldn't go to them and say, okay, so on a scale of one to five, how upset are you? That's not how we talk to humans about their problems, right. That's not how we should talk to our customers about their problems either. That whole like, it's a relic of trying to report statistically significant data up the management chain. But that's not how you get insights. And this is the reason big companies can't innovate, because they've prioritised one pagers with pie charts over actual interesting data. And so the advantage you have as a small team, or an individual or a small company, is that you're able to engage with messy data. And the messy data is where the insights

come from. And if you were talking to your friend, you would say, Wow, you just got dumped, that must suck, tell me everything. And they will, they'll talk for an hour, and you will understand them better, and you will become better friends because of it. It's human understanding. And you want the same human understanding for the people you're trying to serve with your business or your product. And that doesn't come from a clipboard, and a one out of five answer. It comes from saying like, Wow, you are in pain, you are losing money, you are losing time, and you are frustrated, that must suck, tell me everything, and treating them like a human. Like, if you have at least one friend, you already know how to run a brilliant customer conversation. Like just do that stop being so formal.

**Susan Heaton-Wright 31:57**

You know, I love the fact that you advocate Small Talk, I'm, I'm a great advocate, a great fan of small talk. But so often people think it's a waste of time, they've got to get down to business.

32:12

Well, I would say purposeful, small talk. So any small talks, great, you know, for the you know, build the relationship, it's fun and social connection is nice. But I'd say within with like, if you go in and you know, your two or three learning goals, it's directed you're nudging people in that direction, hey, we're question but what about this? You know, it's like, oh, that is a weird question. But this is what we do about it, they'll just tell you the answer. You can use this at events, like instead of swapping business cards with someone and trying to set up a meeting, if we ever get back to events, like what a waste of an opportunity, right? When you're swapping business cards, just say hey, weird question, how do you deal with this, they'll just tell you, you've just skipped the whole meeting. And they'll also remember you because you were the only person at that event who actually gave them a real conversation instead of just trying to pitch. So it's like you already know how to do it, you just need to drop the formality.

**Susan Heaton-Wright 33:04**

Superb. What before we finish? And could you tell us about 'The mom test' the book, how people could perhaps connect with you or if they want to have a conversation with you or even work with you?

33:22

Yet, so the book is called the mom test. I've got three books. One, the mom test is about customer understanding and conversations, which also leads into sales and entrepreneurship. Then I did one about education design called 'the workshop Survival Guide', which is about structuring, interesting events, and education design. Maintaining energy levels, and the most recent one is for anyone who wants to write a nonfiction book, because my books have done relatively well. They you know, the mom test is sold more than 100,000 copies. It's taught at all the top universities like you mentioned in the intro. And that's because of the way they were designed. I didn't write them like a book, I designed them like a product. It is pretty easy to replicate and it totally changes the growth dynamics and profitability of nonfiction. So that's what the current books about and that's called write useful books, [www.writeusefulbooks.com](http://www.writeusefulbooks.com), but they're all on robfitz.com and my emails, robfirtz.com, I'm easy to track down. And if you got questions about any of this stuff, if you if you find me and shoot me a note, I'll record a little video with my answer, and post it to my YouTube channel and send you a link. So I always love hearing from people if you've got any extra questions, and I will answer if I'm able. And if I'm not I will try to point you in the right direction to someone who can answer.

**Susan Heaton-Wright** 34:33

Oh, that's brilliant. So everybody think of a question to ask Rob. About that, you know, this is the real thing. This chap has got so many ideas his book totally flipping the idea of feedback and asking for advice and things like that. This is genius.

34:57

Very kind of you to say I'll try to live up to On Sunday,

**Susan Heaton-Wright** 35:02

The stock picks up a little bit English about that, even though you're not English, that's what we do.

35:10

I am my mother's English and my father's Scottish. Also, I spent 10 years in London, but I just happened. They were sailors and I ended up being born in America due to a quirk of you know how it was to sail boats back then. So that's where I grew up. But yeah, I'm English Heritage. Oh, right. Okay, so

**Susan Heaton-Wright** 35:28

That's where that that comes from that over modesty. It has been an absolute honour to interview you today, Rob. Is there anything else that you would like to share with the audience?

35:42

I'm glad, if you want to write a nonfiction book, definitely check out [writeusefulbooks.com](http://writeusefulbooks.com), we've got a little community of authors, there's like 40 of us who are working on our books together, we're having fun, that's a pretty supportive group, it would be fun to have you there. And then on the actual customer conversations, or the entrepreneurship, my final piece of advice would be that it's a hands on skill, like skateboarding or pottery, and you're not going to be able to learn it perfectly from a book or from a podcast, you know, and this will help you recognise your mistakes, and hopefully identify them sooner and start correcting them. But you're going to need to fall on your butt a few times, you know, like, and so I would say, if you are scared of this, if you're scared of the idea of talking to customers, or exploring your idea, start with the friendly contacts. It's much harder to burn a friendly bridge, go to the people who already like you say like, Hey, listen, can I just ask you questions about your work for half an hour, find someone who's willing to talk to you without an excuse, use that to start building the skills and making your mistakes. And then when you go into the scary conversations with grumpy people, you're a bit more prepared. But give yourself learning time. Like if you were learning to skateboard, you wouldn't drop straight on a halfpipe, right? You'd like start on a pavement with a pillow, like taped your butt or something, I don't know. But like, give yourself that opportunity. And once you do learn it, it's such a valuable skill. Like my background is not in talking my background is I'm a programmer, I'm a developer. I learned talking later. And it's been the biggest multiplier of my career. Because everything else I do is more effective, because I'm able to talk to people now. So well worth learning. You're listening to the right podcast, and I wish you luck. And if you have any questions, shoot me a note and I'll be helpful if I can.

**Susan Heaton-Wright** 37:27

Oh, brilliant. And before you go in the group for the writing of the nonfiction, can you let everybody know just in case somebody who would be interested in that?

37:37

Yeah, it's all off [www.writeusefulbooks.com](http://www.writeusefulbooks.com) .

**Susan Heaton-Wright** 37:41

Okay. Right. You are not write, as in Susan wright it all. Thank you so much, Rob. It has been just been brilliant. My mind is whizzing around even though I'm a mom.

37:59

We can we can do a sequel in a few months after you've tried to apply some of this stuff and run into questions we can. We can jump on this.

**Susan Heaton-Wright** 38:08

I'd love that. I'm sure everyone else would really appreciate that too. And maybe audience if you've got questions that you want me to ask Rob, we could do that. Yeah, that'd be fun, send in your

38:21

questions, and then we'll we'll do another episode. We'll answer them all.

**Susan Heaton-Wright** 38:25

Brilliant. Thank you so much, and keep safe, and everybody keep safe. And well until next time. This is Susan Heaton-Wright. From superstar communicator. You have been listening to the superstar communicator podcast. Don't forget to subscribe and review the podcast on iTunes and on apps. Please contact us if you want to discuss any topic would suggest a topic for us to include or a guest who could come on to the podcast go to [www.superstarcommunicator.com](http://www.superstarcommunicator.com)