
High-Performance Communication
- Critical Discussions -
Or
*“The Circle Surrounds the Fox
Among Hounds”*

Gregg.Oliver@PathfinderCommunication.com

Pathfinder
Communication, LLC



Better Communication, Better Decisions, Better BusinessSM

1) **There are two conversations in every conversation** (*think Lyrics and Music*)

- Content (“CIRCLE”)
- Relationships (“THE S²COR⁴E”)

2) **Critical discussions are discussions in which you are coming to an agreement about something**

- Two Models
 - ✓ Advocacy (the kind we know best)
 - ✓ Inquiry (the kind we need most)

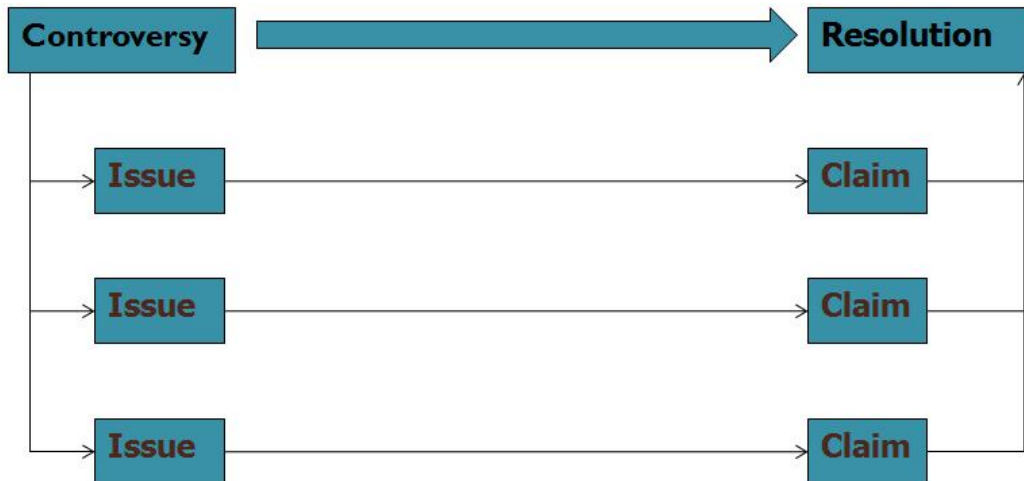
Characteristic	Advocacy	Inquiry
Concept of Decision Making	A contest	Collaborative problem solving
Purpose of discussion	Persuasion and lobbying	Testing and evaluating
Participant’s role	Spokespeople	Critical thinkers
Patterns of behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Strive to persuade others •Defend your position •Downplay weaknesses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Present balanced arguments •Remain open to alternatives •Accept constructive criticism
Minority Views	Discouraged or dismissed	Cultivated and valued
Outcome	Winners and losers	Collective ownership

- Advocacy is intended to be independently-mediated; Inquiry is intended to be self-mediated

3) **Rule of Three**

- Three Domains
 - ✓ Private; day-to-day kind (99% for most of us)
 - ✓ Technical; has formally written and enforced rules
 - ✓ Public; outcome affects the citizenry
- Three Contexts
 - ✓ Lover; we care how this affects each other
 - ✓ Seducer; I will do what it takes to get my way this once, but I want to be able to come back
 - ✓ Abuser; I am just out for me
- Three Temporalities (Times)
 - ✓ Past tense; focus is BLAME
 - ✓ Present tense; focus is VALUES and DUTY
 - ✓ Future tense; focus is CHOICES
- Three Presentation Components
 - ✓ Facts and Logic
 - ✓ Emotional appeal
 - ✓ Passion about achieving a specific mutually-desired outcome

4) Elements of Controversy



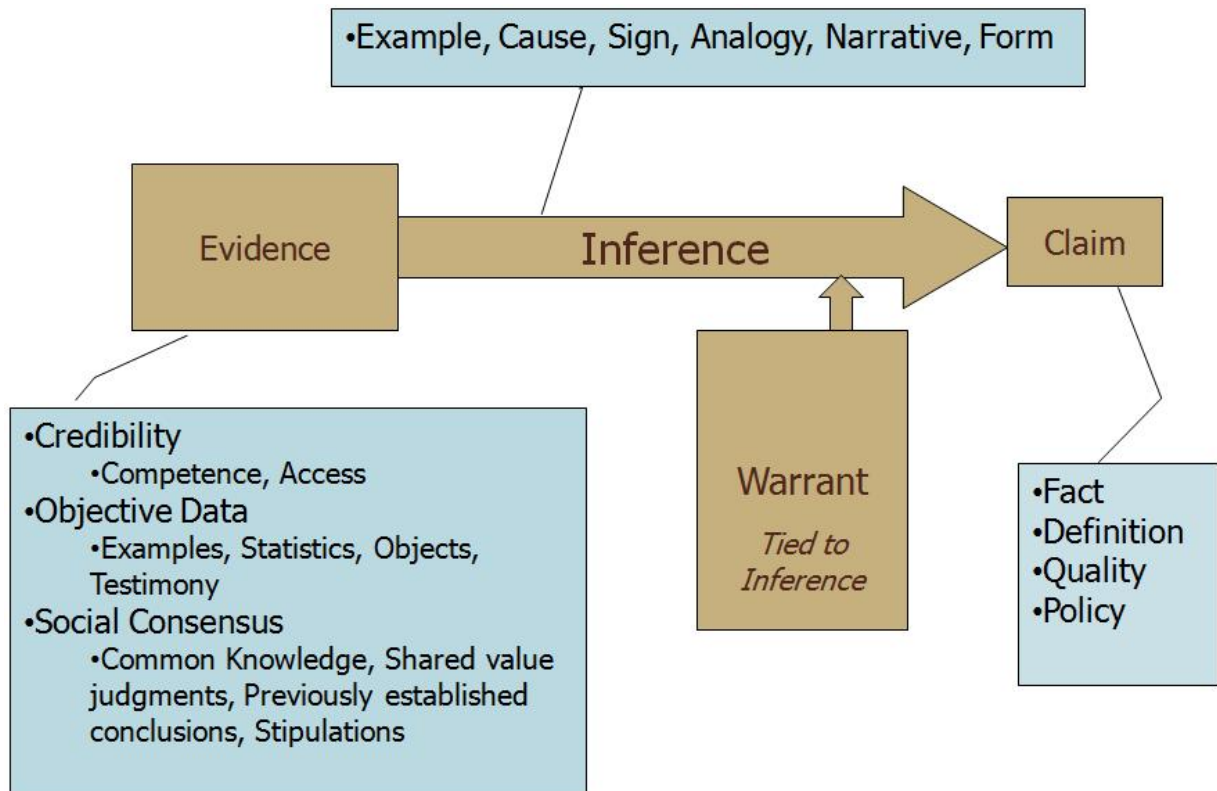
5) Types of Claims

- Fact
 - ✓ Engineering for the project was complete on December 3rd.
- Definition
 - ✓ ~65% of projects are unsuccessful.
- Value (or Quality)
 - ✓ Customer service is unsatisfactory
 - ✓ Price is more important than timely delivery
- Policy
 - ✓ We should change the way we look at Customer Loyalty
 - ✓ Need to, ought to, etc.

6) Formulating Issues

Claim	Stock Issues
Fact	What does the claim mean? What are the criteria? (How do we know?) Have we met it? (What is the test?)
Definition	Is the interpretation relevant? Is the interpretation fair? How do we choose among competing characterizations?
Value	What does the claim mean? Which value should be used to evaluate the subject? What standards are used to measure competing values? Have those standards been met?
Policy	What is the problem? How big is the problem? What is causing the problem? What should be done to correct the problem? How well does the proposal solve the problem? Will the action create other benefits or harm?

7) Model of a Critical Discussion (CIRCLE Model - Claim, Issue, Response, Connection, Logical Evaluation)



8) Evidence (Response)

- Answers the issue
- 3 types
 - ✓ Objective Evidence
 - ✓ Social Consensus
 - ✓ Speaker's Credibility
 - Competence
 - Trustworthiness
 - Good Will
 - Dynamism
 - Eyewitness access to information
 - Background and Training
 - A good track record
- Primary v Secondary; Expert v. Layperson
- Six Levels of Strength (low to high)
 - ✓ Assertion (in my opinion...)
 - ✓ Common Knowledge or Stipulation
 - ✓ Lay Opinion (if a reasoned conclusion)
 - ✓ Expert Opinion or Consensus of Lay Opinion
 - ✓ An Empirical Study or Consensus of Expert Opinion
 - ✓ Consensus of Studies
- Controversies about evidence must be settled
 - ✓ Sometimes in a separate discussion

9) Inference (Connection)

- The logic that relates the evidence to the claim
- The enemy of good logic is bad inference
- Six kinds of Inference (strong to weak)
 - ✓ Example
 - A given example is representative of the population
 - False Generalization / False Categorization
 - ✓ Cause
 - One thing causes another
 - False causation
 - ✓ Sign
 - Two things happen together, but one doesn't cause the other
 - False correlation
 - ✓ Analogy
 - Two things are alike in an important way
 - Bad Analogies
 - ✓ Narrative
 - Life will play out like the story
 - Story not fitting for this situation
 - ✓ Form
 - Inductive logic works like deductive logic in this case
 - Deductive logic almost NEVER applies to anything important outside of math

10) The Rhythm of Reasoning

- The Status Quo
 - ✓ Presumption
- The Challenge
 - ✓ Burden of Upset
- Burden of Proving Assertions
 - ✓ Each party must back up their assertions
- Burden of Rejoinder
 - ✓ Each party must challenge or accept the claims and evidence as they are presented

11) 80/20 rule

