

## **Gift of the GAB**

The human voice: It's the instrument we all play. It's the most powerful sound in the world, probably. It's the only one that can start a war or say resolve a dispute and yet many people have the experience that when they speak, people don't listen to them. And why is that? How can we speak powerfully to make change in the world?

When your job hinges on how well you talk to people, you learn a lot about how to have conversations — and that most of us don't converse very well.

In this insightful read, I shall share some useful rules for having better conversations. "Go out, talk to people, listen to people, and, most importantly, be prepared to be amazed."

This world that we live in, this world in which every conversation has the potential to devolve into an argument, where our politicians can't speak to one another and where even the most trivial of issues have someone fighting both passionately for it and against it, it's not normal. Pew Research did a study of 10,000 American adults, and they found that at this moment, we are more polarized; we are more divided, than we ever have been in history. We're less likely to compromise, which means we're not listening to each other. And we make decisions about where to live, who to marry and even who our friends are going to be, based on what we already believe. Again, that means we're not listening to each other. A conversation requires a balance between talking and listening, and somewhere along the way, we lost that balance.

Now, part of that is due to technology. The smart phones that you all either have in your hands or close enough that you could grab them really quickly are, primarily responsible for this indifference. We are more likely to text their friends than they are to talk to them face to face.

"I came to realize that conversational competence might be the single most overlooked skill we fail to teach. Kids spend hours each day engaging with ideas and each other through screens, but rarely do they have an opportunity to hone their interpersonal communications skills. It might sound like a funny question, but we have to ask ourselves: Is there any 21st-century skill more important than being able to sustain coherent, confident conversation?" Let's see how we can take a step forward in acquiring this significant skill and become an adept conversationalist. Here are few tips:

### **Don't multitask**

And I don't mean just set down your cell phone or your tablet or your car keys or whatever is in your hand. I mean, be present. Be in that moment. If you want to get out of the conversation, get out of the conversation, but don't be half in it and half out of it.

### **Don't pontificate**

If you want to state your opinion without any opportunity for response or argument or pushback or growth, write a blog. The famed therapist M. Scott Peck said that true listening requires a setting aside of oneself. And sometimes that means setting aside your personal opinion.

### **Use open-ended questions**

In this case, take a cue from journalists. Start your questions with who, what, when, where, why or how. If you put in a complicated question, you're going to get a simple answer out. Let them describe it. They're the ones that know. Try asking them things like, "What was that like?" "How did that feel?" Because then they might have to stop for a moment and think about it, and you're going to get a much more interesting response.

### **Go with the flow**

That means thoughts will come into your mind and you need to let them go out of your mind. We've heard interviews often in which a guest is talking for several minutes and then the host comes back in and asks a question which seems like it comes out of nowhere, or it's already been answered. That means the host probably stopped listening two minutes ago because he thought of this really clever question, and he was just bound and determined to say that. And we do the exact same thing.

### **Don't equate your experience with theirs**

All experiences are individual. And, more importantly, it is not about you. You don't need to take that moment to prove how amazing you are or how much you've suffered. Conversations are not a promotional opportunity.

### **Try not to repeat yourself**

It's condescending, and it's really boring, and we tend to do it a lot. Especially in work conversations or in conversations with our kids, we have a point to make, so we just keep rephrasing it over and over. Don't do that.

### **Stay out of the weeds (Unnecessary details)**

Frankly, people don't care about the years, the names, the dates, all those details that you're struggling to come up with in your mind. They don't care. What they care about is you. They care about what you're like, what you have in common. So forget the details. Leave them out.

### **Listen (This one's the most important)**

I cannot tell you how many really important people have said that listening is perhaps the most, the number one most important skill that you could develop. Buddha said, and I'm paraphrasing, "If your mouth is open, you're not really learning."

To finally wrap up here, I have my take: Give your audience a reason to care, be mindful of what you share, the world then will seem really fair if your heart and mind become an ideal pair.

**Mrs. Shivangi Sharma**

*Source: TED Talks*

## **How to tackle your toughest decisions**

Every manager makes tough calls—it comes with the job. And the toughest calls come in the gray areas—situations where you and your team have worked hard to gather the facts and done the best analysis you can, but you still don't know what to do.

Judgment is hard to define. It is a fusion of your thinking, feelings, experience, imagination, and character. But five practical questions can improve your odds of making sound judgments, even when the data is incomplete or unclear, opinions are divided, and the answers are far from obvious.

- What are the net, net consequences of all my options?
- What are my core obligations?
- What will work in the world as it is?
- Who are we?
- What can I live with?

To grapple with these questions, you must rely on the best information and expertise available. But in the end you have to answer them for yourself. With gray-area decisions, you can never be certain you've made the right call. But if you follow this process, you'll know that you worked on the problem in the right way—not just as a good manager but as a thoughtful human being.

### **Net, Net Consequences**

The first question asks you to thoroughly and analytically consider every course of action available to you, along with the full, real-world, human consequences of each. Gray-area problems are rarely resolved in a flash of intuitive brilliance from one person; Don't confuse this with cost-benefit analysis, or focus solely on what you can count or price. Of course, you should get the best data you can and apply the relevant frameworks. But gray-area problems require you to think more broadly, deeply, concretely, imaginatively, and objectively about the full impact of your choices. When you make important, difficult decisions, you affect many people's lives and livelihoods. The first question asks you to grapple hard with that reality.

### **Core Obligations**

We all have duties—as parents, children, citizens, employees. Managers also have duties to shareholders and other stakeholders. But the second question gets at something deeper: the duties we have to safeguard and respect the lives, rights, and dignity of our fellow men and women. How can you figure out specifically what these duties oblige you to do in a particular situation? That involves stepping out of your comfort zone, recognizing your biases and blind spots, and putting yourself in the shoes of all key stakeholders, especially the most vulnerable ones. How would you feel in their place? What would you be most concerned about or afraid of? How would you want to be treated? What would you see as fair? What rights would you believe you had? What would you consider to be hateful? You might speak directly to the people who will be affected by your decision, or ask a member of your team to role-play the outsider or victim as persuasively as he or she can.

### **The World as It Is**

The third question pushes you to look at your problem in a clear-eyed, pragmatic way—seeing the world not as you would like it to be but as it is. Ultimately you need a plan that will work—one that will move an individual, a team, a department, or an entire organization through a gray area responsibly and successfully. The phrase “the world as it is” points toward Niccolò Machiavelli’s thinking—a perspective that might seem surprising in an article about making responsible decisions. But his view is important, because it acknowledges that we don’t live in a predictable, calm environment populated with virtuous people. The world Machiavelli described is unpredictable, difficult, and shaped by self-interest. Sound plans can turn out badly, and bad plans sometimes work. Much of what happens is simply beyond our control. That is why, after considering consequences and duties, you need to think about practicalities: Of the possible solutions to your problem, which is most likely to work? Which is most resilient? And how resilient and flexible are you?

To answer those questions, you need to map the force field of power around you: who wants what and how hard and successfully each person can fight for his aims. You must also ready yourself to be agile and even opportunistic—maneuvering around any roadblocks or surprises—and, when the situation calls for it, to play hardball, asserting your authority and reminding others who is the boss.

### **Who Are We?**

According to an old African adage, “I am because we are.” Put differently, our behavior and identities are shaped by the groups in which we work and live. So this question asks you to step back and think about your decision in terms of relationships, values, and norms. What really matters to your team, company, community, culture? How can you act in a way that reflects and expresses those belief systems? If they conflict, which should take precedence?

To answer those questions, you might think about the defining stories of a particular group—the decisions and incidents that everyone cites when explaining the ideals to which you are collectively committed, what you have struggled to achieve, and what outcomes you try hard to avoid. Imagine that you are writing a sentence or a chapter in your company’s history. Of all the paths you might choose in this gray area, which would best express what your organization stands for?

### **Living with Your Decision**

Good judgment relies on two things: One is the best possible understanding and analysis of the situation. The other involves the values, ideals, vulnerabilities, and experiences of whoever will be making the decision. Ultimately you must choose, commit to, act on, and live with the consequences of your choice. So it must also reflect what you really care about as a manager and a human being. After considering outcomes, duties, practicalities, and values, you must decide what matters most and what matters less. How will you figure out what you can live with? End your conversations with others, close the door, mute the electronics, and stop to reflect. Imagine yourself explaining your decision to a close friend or a mentor—someone you trust and respect deeply. Would you feel comfortable? How would that person react? It may also be helpful to write down your decision and your reasons for it: Writing forces clearer thinking and serves as a form of personal commitment.

When you face a gray-area problem, be sure to systematically answer *all five* of the questions. Don’t simply pick your favorite. Each question is an important voice in the centuries-long conversation about what counts as a sound decision regarding a hard problem with high stakes for other people.

Leadership can be a heavy burden. It is also a compelling, crucial challenge. In gray areas, your job isn’t *finding* solutions; it’s *creating* them, relying on your judgment.

**Ms. Monisha D’costa**

*Source: Harvard Business Review*

## The Law of the Garbage Truck

How often do you let other people's nonsense change your mood? Do you let a bad driver, rude waiter, curt boss, or an insensitive employee ruin your day? Unless you're the Terminator, you're probably set back on your heels. However, the mark of your success is how quickly you can refocus on what's important in your life.

Sixteen years ago I learned this lesson. And I learned it in the back of a New York City taxi cab. Here's what happened. I hopped in a taxi, and we took off for Grand Central Station. We were driving in the right lane when all of a sudden, a black car jumped out of a parking space right in front of us. My taxi driver slammed on his brakes, the car skidded, the tires squealed, and at the very last moment our car stopped just one inch from the other car's back-end.

I couldn't believe it. But then I couldn't believe what happened next. The driver of the other car, the guy who almost caused a big accident, whipped his head around and he started yelling bad words at us. How do I know? Ask any New Yorker, some words in New York come with a special face. And he even threw in a one finger salute! I couldn't believe it!

But then here's what really blew me away. My taxi driver just smiled and waved at the guy. And I mean, he was friendly. So, I said, "Why did you just do that!? This guy could have killed us!" And this is when my taxi driver told me what I now call, "The Law of the Garbage Truck®." He said: *"Many people are like garbage trucks. They run around full of garbage, full of frustration, full of anger, and full of disappointment. As their garbage piles up, they look for a place to dump it. And if you let them, they'll dump it on you. So when someone wants to dump on you, don't take it personally. Just smile, wave, wish them well, and move on. Believe me. You'll be happier."*

So I started thinking, how often do I let Garbage Trucks run right over me? And how often do I take their garbage and spread it to other people at work, at home, or on the street? It was then that I said, "I don't want their garbage and I'm not going to spread it anymore."

I began to see Garbage Trucks. Like in the movie "The Sixth Sense," the little boy said, "I see Dead People." Well now "I see Garbage Trucks." I see the load they're carrying. I see them coming to dump it. And like my taxi driver, I don't take it personally; I just smile, wave, wish them well, and I move on.

One of my favorite football players of all time was Walter Payton. Every day on the football field, after being tackled, he would jump up as quickly as he hit the ground. He never dwelled on a hit. Payton was ready to make the next play his best. Over the years the best players from around the world in every sport have played this way: Muhammad Ali, Nadia Comaneci, Bjorn Borg, Chris Evert, Michael Jordan, Jackie Robinson, and Pele are just some of those players. And the most inspiring leaders have lived this way: Nelson Mandela, Mother Theresa, Gandhi, and Martin Luther King.

See, Roy Baumeister, a psychology researcher from Florida State University, found in his extensive research that you remember bad things more often than good things in your life. You store the bad memories more easily, and you recall them more frequently.

So the odds are against you when a Garbage Truck comes your way. But when you follow The Law of the Garbage Truck, you take back control of your life. You make room for the good by letting go of the bad.

The best leaders know that they have to be ready for their next meeting. The best sales people know that they have to be ready for their next client. And the best parents know that they have to be ready to greet their children with hugs and kisses, no matter how many garbage trucks they might have faced that day. All of us know that we have to be fully present, and at our best for the people we care about.

The bottom line is that successful people do not let Garbage Trucks take over their lives.

What about you? What would happen in your life, starting today, if you let more garbage trucks pass you by?

**Here's my bet: You'll be happier!**

**Ms. Krupa Shah**

*Source: [academictips.org](http://academictips.org)*

### **The Three-Legged Race**

A professional education in management, engineering or technology tries to prepare the trained individuals for a career in the future. Few people would go on to become entrepreneurs and start their own organizations; most would join existing organizations and try to make a career in these organizations. Their success in going up the organizational pyramid depends on three factors – ability, efforts, and luck, which would yield results.

When one is at a very junior level, one has no subordinates. But everybody at all levels has a boss and colleagues. How to 'manage' them to get their support is a factor that plays a vital role in climbing up the organizational pyramid. At the next level in organization, one gets subordinates. Everybody pines for more and more subordinates. But when he gets them, the complaint is: "Subordinates are a big headache." One has to understand, that subordinates are both, assets and liabilities. How to convert most of them into assets is the key to success.

Success involves talent, efforts and luck (the three legs of a race). Everybody has some talents and everybody tries to make some efforts. How effective the talents and efforts they depend on the ability to create cooperation, collaboration and coordination with those people around. These aspects cannot be really 'taught' through any lessons but have to be 'caught' by observing, internalizing and comprehending your own experiences. The best talent does not always produce the best results. Hard work by a person is not always effective unless it is co-coordinated with the people around him. This coordination depends on the attitude of each person one is dealing with and consequently one has to run different three-legged races with different persons one is working with. It obviously gets greater importance at home where the coordination with wife and children is essential to create a successful life. In voluntary organizations like professional associations or social service institutions, the ability to work with people utilizing their talents to the best advantage is essential for success.

To sum up, although we spend our life in trying to improve our talents and efforts and blame all the failures on luck, the luck seem to emerge out of our ability to create co-operation, collaboration, coordination, which is, our ability to run the three-legged race.

**Ms. Yamini Kudal**

*Source: The Free Press Journal*